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R.A. Weedon

‘Why do I go on doing these things?’

**The Continuity and Context of
Gerald Finzi’s Extended Choral Works.**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the
Department of Music,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Durham,
May 2012**

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Abstract

Gerald Finzi's reputation as one of England's most respected twentieth-century composers of choral music has continued to grow since his death in 1956. Due to the cost and logistics of performing large-scale works for chorus and orchestra, his settings of English literature for these forces are often obscured behind his output of songs and instrumental works, yet form a backbone to his oeuvre, culminating in *Intimations of Immortality* and *In Terra Pax*, the works which arguably offer the greatest summation of his compositional personality.

This dissertation will argue that it is only through examination of his large-scale choral output that one can gain a sense of the composer's development and contextual interests; through these works, Finzi displays some of his finest word setting for both solo and multiple voices, and demonstrates choral writing and orchestral ambition on a par with his contemporaries. It examines these trends through the context in which they were composed, beginning with his 1924 *Requiem da Camera* and ending with *In Terra Pax* of 1954, his last completed work, discussing his distinctive signature paradigms and structures, and showing how from inauspicious early works, Finzi developed a distinctive compositional idiom of his own; music which even after a few bars is unmistakably by the composer. It will also examine the era in which Finzi was writing these works, arguing that the composer was perhaps one of the final exponents of a largely nineteenth-century form, perhaps as a result of the influence of his composition teachers, his research into the works of the nineteenth century, particular Parry, and his friendship or knowledge of the work of his contemporaries Ralph Vaughan Williams, as well as earlier Baroque composers.

For the sake of categorisation, this dissertation has limited 'large scale choral works' to his works of a length beyond that of an anthem and utilising chorus, orchestral or instrumental accompaniment and vocal soloists – works that roughly correspond to the scale of a cantata, oratorio or choral ode. However, to imagine that these works developed independently of the rest of Finzi's output would be an oversight, and significant works from outside his choral works will be discussed.

‘Why do I go on doing these things?’

The Continuity and Context of Gerald Finzi’s Extended Choral Works.

Gerald Finzi’s reputation as one of England’s most respected twentieth-century composers of choral music has continued to grow over the years following his death in 1956. Often considered to be ‘The Poet’s Composer’, the compositional career of Gerald Raphael Finzi (1901-1956) is dotted with many ambitious choral works, almost all of them settings of English literature.¹ These act as a backbone to his output, and demonstrate the composer’s interests and personality perhaps to a greater extent than his writing in other genres.

During his lifetime, his choral works often found themselves in the shadow of his instrumental works and extensive contribution to the repertoire of English song. In Finzi’s introduction to his catalogue of works, *Absalom’s Place*, he quotes Thomas Hardy’s poem ‘Why do I go on doing these things’ from *Human Shows* as an open question as to the musician’s need to compose.² This sentiment can certainly be applied to his contributions to the large-scale choral genre, which by this point in the history of British music was already a style in decline, and one which the composer knew would not be met with critical approval.³ The popularity of large choral festivals had declined following the two world wars, conflicts which also had an important effect on Finzi, both personally and professionally.

Howard Ferguson asserted in a 1996 biographical introduction that ‘Most of Finzi’s immediate public successes were born at the Three Choirs’.⁴ Indeed, Finzi has often been categorised as simply a ‘Three Choirs composer’, a fair assessment given the number of premieres that took place at this annual event and his continued appreciation at the Festival,

¹ Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002). 398.

² Gerald Finzi, *Absalom’s Place*. Preface to Finzi’s catalogue of works, written July 1941. Reprinted in Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). 277.

³ Gerald Finzi, Programme note to *Intimations of Immortality*, Gloucester Three Choirs Festival, 5 September 1950. Reprinted in Ralph Jordan (ed.) *The Clock of the Years* (Lichfield: Chosen Press, 2007). 107.

⁴ Howard Ferguson, ‘Gerald Finzi’ in *Gerald Finzi: A Bio-bibliography*. Ed. John C. Dressler (Greenwood Press, 1997). 14.

but a phrase that a contemporary, John Russell, writing about the composer in 1954 was quick to dismiss.⁵ Russell comments that:

His style is so different from those of his much-noised contemporaries that he is regarded as a placid backwater off the main stream; as one who (it would seem) almost perversely writes music which is a joy to perform and a pleasure to listen to.⁶

This dissertation will argue that through examination of Finzi's large-scale choral output one can gain a sense of the composer's development and contextual interests in the relationship between poetry and music which bookends the beginning of his compositional maturity through to his final, most personal work; through his choral works, Finzi displays some of his finest word setting for both solo and multiple voices, and demonstrates choral writing and orchestral ambition on a par with his contemporaries. It will examine certain trends arising across Finzi's large-scale choral works through analysis of his scores, in particular thematic interest and the context in which the works were composed, beginning with early works such as his 1924 *Requiem da Camera*, his first completed choral work of any great ambition, and ending with his 'Christmas Scene' *In Terra Pax* of 1954, one of his last completed works, and in many respects his most personal summation of his compositional personality. It will examine something of the era and context in which Finzi was writing these works, arguing that through his choice of the large-scale choral ode over forms such as the symphony, Finzi was perhaps one of the final exponents of a largely nineteenth-century trend of writing settings of secular texts for choral festivals, something which was already a diminishing form in the post-World War I era. It will also touch upon the influence of his composition teachers and late nineteenth century British composers, in particular Finzi's oft-quoted similarity to Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, and via the nineteenth-century revival of the Baroque, the

⁵ John Russell, 'Gerald Finzi: An English Composer' in *Tempo*, No. 33 (Autumn, 1954), 15. Hereafter cited as Russell.

⁶ Ibid.

influence of J.S. Bach. However, this work will primarily not attempt to see him in light of his forebears and contemporaries, but examine something of the composer's own distinct style, and argue that although increasing in ambition, it largely stayed within a conservative framework. In one of the few contemporary overviews of Finzi published during his lifetime, Russell wrote:

There is no doubt that [his music] is in the tradition of Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Parry, and Holst, but of those only the last could have written a bar of Finzi... He is either relegated to the neighbouring coppice with Butterworth and Gurney or he is entombed in a western cathedral with Parry.⁷

An examination of his distinctive signature paradigms and structures will attempt to show how Finzi developed a distinctive compositional idiom of his own; music which even after a few bars is unmistakably by the composer.

For the sake of categorisation, this dissertation has limited 'large scale choral works' to his works of a length beyond that of an anthem and utilising chorus, orchestral or instrumental accompaniment and vocal soloists – works that roughly correspond to the scale of a cantata, oratorio or choral ode. However, to imagine that these works developed independently of the rest of Finzi's output is also a mistake, and a number of other significant influences from outside his choral works, such as *Dies Natalis*, will be discussed.

As the composer did not complete a symphony, it is his longest and most ambitious work, a setting of Wordsworth's *Ode: Intimations of Immortality upon Recollections of Early Childhood* (a work that was over fifteen years in gestation) that arguably stands above Finzi's output as demonstrating the composer at the height of his powers, and this work, *Intimations of Immortality* Op.29, is rightly given the greatest study in this work.

⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 1 – Context and biography

i. Literature review

By comparison to many of his contemporaries, there is a wealth of extant literature about Gerald Finzi, both biographical and musicological, although the quality and usefulness can be variable. Primary, contemporary articles on Gerald Finzi are notable by their absence, and indeed during his life, only a handful of short assessments were published which are only worthy of a mention due to this fact. He elicits a short mention in Robin Hull's contribution to the 1951 revised edition of *British Music of Our Time* edited by A.L. Bacharach, which notes that 'his vocal and choral settings [are] particularly remarkable'.⁸ However, the scope of the overview only emphasises works premiered before the article's initial publication in 1946, as it concludes with *Dies Natalis*, and does not mention any of his extended choral works. A few years later, the Autumn 1954 edition of *Tempo* published a thorough eight-page overview of the composer, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer* by John Russell (not to be confused with the book by Stephen Banfield), which mentions most of Finzi's significant works. This is probably the most extensive contemporary study of the composer completed while he was still alive. Russell's article features some useful, quotable material, and even discusses contemporary critical opinions of the composer:

If there is anything at all to commend Finzi's vocal work, it must first and foremost be his sensitive response to the cadences of the English Language. There is perhaps a more intimate marriage of these to the pitch and rhythm of the music than in the work of any other British composer. So close is the bond that it is the easiest thing in the world for a hostile

⁸ Robin Hull, 'What Now?' in *British Music of Our Time*, ed. A.L. Bacharach (London: Penguin Books, 1951) 215.

critic to level against it the accusation of painstaking and laborious literalness.⁹

It is also notable in being the first article to identify the problems of assessing Finzi, notably the extended periods of composition which make classifying eras in his development difficult, and the importance of the texts to his choral and vocal works. Following this article is a short study of several of Finzi's published songs by C. M. Boyd, which acts more as an introduction to his works than a true analysis, but is notable as being the first study of his solo song output. Following his death, several obituaries, some by composers and friends such as Arthur Bliss, were published, although these mostly focus on the man, rather than his music. All of the articles on Finzi written during his life have the serious deficiency that nearly one third of his output had been left unperformed or part incomplete.

Finzi himself left several pieces of writing which give useful clues to his compositional intentions, and which are available on the website of the Finzi Trust. In July 1941, he wrote an introduction to his catalogue of works called *Absalom's Place*, in which he demonstrates something of his own philosophy, although this gives away little about his music. More usefully, in 1954 he was invited to give a series of lectures at the Royal College of Music on the topic of 'The Composer's Use of Words'.¹⁰ These were transcribed, and have recently been edited together and made available by Diana McVeagh. In these three lectures, Finzi spoke at length about other composers' settings of literature, but gives away something of his own opinions and methods in doing so, which is particularly relevant to any study of his choral and vocal works.

Following his death in 1956, the efforts of his family and friends were instrumental in generating a burgeoning interest in the composer which lasts until this day. In particular, his

⁹ Russell, 11.

¹⁰ Gerald Finzi, 'The Composer's Use of Words', transcript of his three *Crees Lectures*, delivered 1954 at the Royal College of Music, ed. Diana McVeagh 2007. Available at <<http://www.geraldfinzi.org/?page=/about/crees.html>>

close friend Howard Ferguson, who was to become Finzi's 'musical executor', edited and prepared many of his works for publication by Boosey & Hawkes during the 1950s, for example grouping unpublished songs into appropriate collections and even orchestrating incomplete works such as *The Fall of the Leaf*. His editorial notes, as befits their close friendship, are insightful.

The posthumous release of many of Finzi's works on LP, particularly on the Lyrita and EMI labels during the 1960s and 1970s, generated an unprecedented level of enthusiasm in the composer, particularly during the 1980s.¹¹ However, it has only been the last decade which has seen the publication of two full-length assessments of Finzi. Both publications are of the 'life and works' genre, intercutting a linear biographical narrative with sections focussing on his works. Ultimately, both books offer valid assessment of the composer, but with markedly different tones.

Soon after the composer's death in 1956, Diana McVeagh, a biographer of Elgar, was appointed by Joy Finzi to write her husband's biography, offering McVeagh unprecedented access to his papers, manuscripts and personal accounts of the composer.¹² McVeagh is usually considered the authority on the music of Finzi, having written his *Grove* entry, plus numerous LP and CD notes from the early releases of Finzi to the present day. Thus, her book, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music*, can be considered the 'authorised biography'.¹³

However, McVeagh was only to complete and publish this book in 2005, almost fifty years after her initial commission. In the meantime, Stephen Banfield had published a significant biography of the composer in 1997, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*. Despite having less personal access to the Finzi family, his can be considered the more scholarly

¹¹ Stephen Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997) 491-492. Hereafter cited as Banfield.

¹² Ibid., 485.

¹³ Diana McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press 2005). Hereafter cited as McVeagh.

work. This builds upon Banfield's earlier publication *Sensibility and English Song* (1985),¹⁴ which focuses purely on the song output of the composer, plus a number of insightful journal articles on Finzi-related topics, such as his 1975 comparison of the *Immortality Odes* of Arthur Somervell and Finzi.¹⁵ Banfield's book is a comprehensive study of the composer, with extensive analysis of all of Finzi's works, even his juvenilia. It also features testaments from figures who knew him, both primary and secondary accounts of the composer, and is heavy on historical context. The bibliography and appendices are also extensive.

By contrast, McVeagh offers a gentle biography with humorous asides and digestible musical details, although one feels at times that she is so involved with the composer as to lack detachment. The work is clearly intended to appeal to a wider audience and be of interest to the Finzi enthusiast as well as the academic. By contrast, Stephen Banfield's work is detached, analytical, critical, but at times surprisingly disparaging of its subject. The two books could not be more different, despite ostensibly overlapping content. As a pair, they complement when used in conjunction with one another.

A significant proportion of McVeagh's book is based upon the personal correspondence of Finzi with other composers and figures from the world of art and music, particularly Ferguson. Since the publication of his book, much of the correspondence between these two composers has been published separately in *The Letters of Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson*, collated by Ferguson and edited by Michael Hurd.¹⁶ The substantial volume offers an insight into Finzi's compositional habits, as he imparts his current music preoccupations to his close friend, as well as of his influences, opinions and experience of life within the London music scene. Photocopies of many of Finzi's letters to other composers are

¹⁴ Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Hereafter cited as *Sensibility and English Song*.

¹⁵ Stephen Banfield, 'The Immortality Odes of Finzi and Somervell' in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 116, No. 1588. (Jun., 1975), 527-529+531.

¹⁶ Howard Ferguson & Michael Hurd, (ed.), *Letters of Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001). Hereafter cited as Ferguson and Hurd.

viewable in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, although some significant letters to composers such as Ralph Vaughan Williams have been published elsewhere (see below).

For many years, the ‘Finzi Friends’, essentially the Finzi Society, have been steadily commissioning short articles and yearly lectures about the composer and related figures in their annual newsletter. In 2008, many of these were made available to the wider public in *The Clock of the Years: A Gerald and Joy Finzi Anthology*.¹⁷ Although most of the articles available in this volume are of a biographical nature, there are some useful studies by academics, particularly Stephen Banfield and Philip Thomas, plus contributions from performers and conductors of his music, and a number of letters and other papers related to the composer.

Further published discussion of Finzi is available in *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers* by Trevor Hold, which, like Banfield’s *Sensibility and English Song*, uses a chronological order to trace a linear evolution of English song.¹⁸ Indeed, it is Finzi’s songs which have probably received the largest focus of scholarship. In terms of academic scholarship, the composer’s works have been the subject of a number of theses at various levels, particularly in a number of dissertations from American universities in the 1980s, as outlined in Banfield’s extensive bibliography. However, many of these suffer from being written at a time when several Finzi works were unpublished or unavailable, and also lack the insight of recent scholarship. A bio-bibliography by J.C. Dressler was published in 1997, which features an insightful biography, a comprehensive bibliography up to 1996, and excerpts of contemporary reviews.¹⁹ It is also very useful in featuring a list of Finzi’s preserved manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

¹⁷ Rolf Jordan, (ed.) *The Clock of the Years: A Gerald and Joy Finzi Anthology* (Lichfield: Chosen Press, 2007).

¹⁸ Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002).

¹⁹ John C. Dressler, *Gerald Finzi: A Bio-bibliography* (London: Greenwood Press, 1997).

ii. Biography

As noted above, a number of comprehensive biographies of Finzi have been published in the last two decades which offer studies of Finzi both as a composer and an individual. This thesis does not claim to be a biography - however, as many of the aspects of his life affected his music, particularly the choice of texts, a short biographical note follows, highlighting important incidents in his life.

Gerald Raphael Finzi was born in London on 14 July 1901, the fifth and last child of John Abraham Finzi and his wife Eliza. Finzi's family was a wealthy middle-class merchant household of Jewish heritage – his father of Italian Jewish origin and his mother German. The family were not practicing Jews, and Finzi himself never acknowledged his heritage; even Howard Ferguson was unaware until after Finzi's death.²⁰ As a child, encouraged by his musical mother, he began an interest in music and, according to his son Christopher, had decided to be a composer by age nine.²¹ However, his early life was clouded by a series of premature deaths; his father died of cancer in 1909, and three of his brothers died of pneumonia, suicide and in combat, respectively throughout the proceeding decade.²² The greatest tragedy in his early life was the death of his first composition teacher, Ernest Bristow Farrar, killed aged 32 in World War I. Finzi had undertaken his first composition lessons with Farrar in Harrogate in 1915 and appears to have regarded Farrar as almost a surrogate brother and confidant as much as a teacher, Finzi having never been close to his brothers or sister Katie, who later published a famous diary of her experiences as a nurse in World War I.²³

²⁰ McVeagh, 255.

²¹ Christopher Finzi, Biographical note for *Dies Natalis* (London: EMI Classics, 1964; Reissued 1996). 5.

²² Ferguson and Hurd, 3-4.

²³ McVeagh, 10.

Farrar's death was a great blow to the young composer, and drew the already shy boy further into himself.²⁴ Finzi had not followed a normal education, withdrawing from prep school and refusing to follow his brothers in attending public school, therefore gaining few standard qualifications. His standard of musical performance was never good, and he was even advised not to consider a musical career by Charles Villiers Stanford.²⁵ Being largely self-educated, he began an intense interest in English literature, particularly English poetry and by the time of his death had amassed an extensive private collection, now preserved at the University of Reading.²⁶ It was during this time that he became interested in Thomas Hardy, a poet whose texts he was to return to throughout his career. He also encountered for the first time poets such as Thomas Traherne, only recently discovered, whom he was to set in his masterpiece *Dies Natalis*.

After Farrar had been called up, Finzi reluctantly began lessons with Edward Bairstow, the organist of York Minster, which became a permanent arrangement following Farrar's death. His tutelage under Bairstow was a stricter, and therefore less happy experience for the independently-minded Finzi, yet it has been speculated by Stephen Banfield that this strict tutoring was important in focussing the interests of the composer – Bairstow himself was a noted composer of anthems and other choral works, and his teaching of counterpoint and song accompaniments was crucial to Finzi's development. Bairstow also encouraged the composer, organising performances of his (now mostly withdrawn) early choral compositions.

In 1922, Finzi and his mother moved to Painswick in Gloucestershire, where he became interested in the Arts and Crafts movement, although he appears to have continued lessons with Bairstow. Finzi's compositions from this era are largely of the 'pastoral'

²⁴ Christopher Finzi, Biographical note for *Dies Natalis* (London: EMI Classics, 1964; Reissued 1996). 5.

²⁵ McVeagh, 14.

²⁶ University of Reading Library Special Collections: Finzi Book Room. Accessed April 2009.
<<http://www.rdg.ac.uk/special-collections/collections/sc-finzi-books.aspx>>

school.²⁷ His first success was *A Severn Rhapsody* for chamber orchestra, published in the Carnegie Collection of British Music in 1924.²⁸ A similar, but more personal work, the *Requiem da Camera* in memory of Farrar, was completed during this period, although rejected by publishers. Finzi was not to attempt another large-scale choral work for over a decade.

Dissatisfied with his technique, he decided to pursue his musical interests further by moving back to London to begin harmony and counterpoint lessons with R.O. Morris in 1926. It was here that Finzi became acquainted with several composers important to his development, such as Ralph Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells, and he became close friends with Howard Ferguson, with whom he kept up a comprehensive correspondence for the rest of his life.²⁹ During the late 1920s and early 1930s he concentrated on writing a piano concerto (incomplete), a *Violin Concerto* (performed in 1927, but later withdrawn) and the song cycle *A Young Man's Exhortation*, the first work to gain him significant attention, as well as a number of smaller choral works such as his *Three Elegies* and works which have now been rather neglected, such as his highly contrapuntal *Prelude and Fugue for String Trio* written in honour of Morris.

Finzi also commenced work on a number of pieces that he would only complete decades later, most notably the work which is often considered his masterpiece, *Dies Natalis*, although the intended premiere of the work in 1939 was delayed by the onset of World War II.³⁰ During this period, his health suffered and in 1928 he spent several months in a sanatorium in Sussex with suspected tuberculosis.³¹ While ill, he started work on his *Two Milton Sonnets*, based on the poet's musings on his increasing blindness. Although their

²⁷ Ferguson and Hurd, 4.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ McVeagh, 45-46.

³¹ Ibid., 16.

forces and vocal style foreshadowed *Dies Natalis*, when first performed in 1936 reviews were critical of his choice of such well-known poems.³² 1936 also saw the premiere of his Hardy song collection *Earth and Air and Rain*. He briefly took a teaching post at the RCM, but left this position in 1933 when he married the artist Joyce Black, who brought emotional stability to his life, as well as financial security.³³ They moved to the country, first to Aldbourne, Wiltshire, and then Ashmansworth, Berkshire, where Finzi built a house named Church Farm. His sons Christopher (Kiffer) and Nigel were born in 1934 and 1936 respectively. During this period, his research into the works of neglected composers increased, and he was instrumental in collecting and cataloguing works by Ivor Gurney and Hubert Parry, as well as several forgotten eighteenth-century composers such as William Boyce and John Stanley, the latter two as a result of his founding of the Newbury String Players, an amateur string orchestra, in 1940.

During World War II, Finzi's compositional career was effectively put on hold by his decision to work for the Ministry of War Transport, where he was a clerk for the duration of the conflict.³⁴ This held up the completion of works began in the 1930s, such as *Intimations of Immortality*, originally destined to be completed to celebrate Vaughan William's 70th birthday in 1942, but replaced on that occasion by the new Shakespeare song cycle *Let Us Garlands Bring*. However, after the success of *Dies Natalis* in 1945, Finzi began to gain commissions for works such as the *Clarinet Concerto*, as well as choral commissions such as *For St Cecilia* which both appeared in 1949, following on from the well-received *Lo, The Full Final Sacrifice* of 1948. Indeed, it was only in the post-war period that his career really took-off, and he began to complete works he had started before the war, as well as gaining

³² Diana McVeagh, notes to Finzi: *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Let Us Garlands Bring*, *Two Milton Sonnets*, et al. (Monmouth: Lyrita, 1979/2007) SRCD.237.

³³ Ferguson and Hurd, 16.

³⁴ Banfield, 279.

new commissions. This culminated in the premiere of *Intimations of Immortality* at the Three Choirs Festival in 1950, which was to be his largest work in terms of scale and ambition.

Finzi's success was tempered in 1952 by the diagnosis of terminal Hodgkinson's Disease, a form of brain cancer. While it did not affect his faculties, Finzi rushed to complete everything he had intended to write, leading to a flurry of new completions from earlier material, as well as a decision to consign several unrealistic works-in-progress to history, such as a half-complete light music *Serenade* in the style of Elgar and a long-running intention to write a symphony, of which only a few sketches exist.³⁵ He devoted most of his energy to writing his anguished *Cello Concerto*, dedicated to his wife, and his final completed work *In Terra Pax*, drawing on a text he associated with a night on Chosen Hill, Gloucestershire. Following the premiere of the orchestral version at the 1956 Three Choirs Festival, Finzi took Vaughan Williams to see the spot, calling at the sexton's cottage. It was here that he caught chicken pox from the sexton's children which, given his weakened condition, caused severe brain inflammation. He died at the Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford on 27th September 1956.³⁶

Following his death, his executors Howard Ferguson, Joy Finzi and Kiffer Finzi compiled and published a number of works which had yet to be heard, amongst them the *Eclogue for Piano and Strings*, the *Fall of the Leaf* (orchestrated by Ferguson) and several collections of songs.

³⁵ Banfield, 463.

³⁶ Ferguson and Hurd, 303.

iii. Historical context

The context of Finzi's large-scale settings of English literature can be traced back to the diversification in the conventions of the English oratorio at the turn of the twentieth century. Howard E. Smither, in Volume IV of *A History of the Oratorio*, notes in his introduction to the twentieth century that:

While the majority of twentieth century oratorios continue to be religious, or at least ethical, more have secular themes than in the nineteenth century.³⁷

Certainly, the choice of texts set by composers for works featuring chorus, soloists and orchestra began to expand beyond the realm of libretti based on Biblical subjects and texts, particularly the focus on the Old Testament seen in nineteenth-century oratorios. Although it could be argued that Sterndale-Bennett's 1858 *The May Queen* was within this canon, it was the later Victorian composers who contributed most notably to this trend, setting devotional or even secular poetry of their own country instead of Biblical texts. In *William Walton: Music and Literature*, Lewis Foreman writes:

In the Victorian oratorio tradition texts were taken either from the Bible or written in quasi-biblical language by clerics or music critics of the day. The choice of familiar and less well-known poetry was first made by Parry who trawled the length and breadth of English literature for his 12 sets of English Lyrics and who looked to Milton for some of his greatest choral successes.³⁸

In particular, it was C. Hubert Parry's ode *Blest Pair of Sirens* of 1887 which set a precedent for the era in presenting a setting of Milton's 'At a Solemn Musick' for large-scale forces. The work, which lasts roughly eleven minutes was immediately successful and led to a number of further commissions for the composer. These settings of English literature were

³⁷ Howard E. Smither, *A History of the Oratorio Volume 4: The Oratorio in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000). 631. Hereafter cited as Smither.

³⁸ Lewis Foreman, 'Walton's Words' in *William Walton: Music and Literature*. ed. R. Steward Craggs (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). 232-233.

highly popular with choral societies, and the characteristics of Parry's piece were much imitated by his contemporaries. This work was to be especially influential for Finzi, and Stephen Banfield has written at length about shared paradigms between this work and *For St Cecilia*.³⁹

Edward Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* (op.38), first performed in 1900, was another revolutionary work which saw an English poem set in the style of an oratorio of the length and breadth expected of the genre. Indeed, Howard Smither, writing in the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* called *Gerontius* 'not only the most important oratorio of the Victorian period but the most creative English oratorio since Handel'.⁴⁰ Part of Smither's justification for this eulogy is that Elgar dared to set a poem by Cardinal Newman (one of the key figures in the Oxford Movement, who later joined the Roman Catholic Church). Although the poem itself is of a religious nature, with the dramatic content describing the last prayers and dream of a dying man, the work is explicitly not based upon a Biblical text or subject. After an initially slow reaction, the work became a great success, and Stephen Banfield suggests that many British composers became pre-occupied with equalling the work, stating that 'their main task since 1900 [had been] to find a successor to *Gerontius*', a quest which ultimately restricted their contributions for the next 50 years.⁴¹

Despite its usual description as an 'oratorio', Elgar himself notably refused to categorize *Gerontius* as one, and the word does not appear on the publication. Smither notes that August Jaeger, Elgar's publisher, originally referred to the work as a 'sacred cantata' in the Novello catalogue, and it was only after this description was refuted by the composer that *Gerontius* was reluctantly categorized as an 'oratorio' by the publisher. Indeed, Elgar himself

³⁹ Banfield, 347.

⁴⁰ Howard E. Smither, 'Oratorio' in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Accessed 3 Nov. 2008 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20397>>

⁴¹ Stephen Banfield, 'Oratorios, Cantatas and Large-Scale Masses' in *Music in Britain: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995). 407.

insisted that ‘There’s no word invented yet to describe it.’⁴² In this admission, Elgar detailed a problem that continues to plague categorizing extended works for choir, orchestra and soloists throughout the twentieth century, particularly throughout the 1920s and 1930s, with the emergence of several pieces for these forces which defy description. Elgar wasn’t the first to alter the practice of large-scale choral writing. Another early exponent of this practice was Sir Henry Walford Davies, who also drew upon the idea of a ‘secular oratorio’, writing *Everyman* in 1904, which follows a conceptually similar theme to *Gerontius*, and which according to Foreman was as popular in its day, despite being largely forgotten by the 1930s.⁴³

The most useful description without religious connotations for these works is that of the ‘ode’, a notable example from 1911-1912 being Edward Elgar’s *The Music Makers* (op.69), which sets a text by A. O’Shaughnessy (1844-1881) devoid of religious imagery (except perhaps two Biblical locations). ‘Ode’ by its strictest musical definition imparts that the works contain a ceremonial aspect, although the Oxford definition also notes that the term may be used for works with particular significance to the composer.⁴⁴ Both categorisations could be applied to the works of Finzi, particularly the *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*. Another precedent for Finzi’s choral odes are Parry’s larger choral works, including works such as *The Lotos-Eaters*, the *Invocation to Music*, *Ode on the Nativity*, and even the sets of six ‘Ethical Cantatas’, all of which are scored for soloists, chorus and orchestra, and which display elements which were evidently influential on Finzi, particularly in his writing for

⁴² Letter from Elgar to Jaegar, 23 August 1904, quoted in Smither, Howard E., *A History of the Oratorio Volume 4: The Oratorio in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000). 371.

⁴³ Hugh Ottaway and Lewis Foreman, ‘Sir Walford Davies’ in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*. Accessed 19 Nov. 2008 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07302>>

⁴⁴ ‘Ode’ in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*, fourth edition ed. Michael Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). 525.

soloists coupled with a large chorus. Parry's assemblage of several texts into a libretto from a variety of sources in the ethical works may have also been influential.

A particularly important element in the commissioning of these works was the popularity of large musical festivals, in particular the annual Three Choirs Festival held in Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford Cathedrals in rotation. Indeed, the second performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* in 1902 at the festival apparently saved the work from obscurity, following a disappointing premiere in Birmingham. The festival had a strong tradition of oratorio-scale works, and the popularity of English language oratorios by German composers, particularly Handel's *Messiah* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* led to yearly performances of these works. Another staple of the festival in the late nineteenth century was Parry, whose *Scenes from Prometheus Unbound* and *Job* were given first performances in 1880 and in 1892 respectively.⁴⁵ Parry's setting of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* for the 1880 Gloucester Three Choirs Festival moves away from Christian texts, instead finding its subject in Classical mythology and, more specifically, the English Romantic movement's interpretation of it. The gradual introduction of non-religious material was not without difficulties; some members of the clergy were uncomfortable with the subjects of these newer works, and several notable modern oratorios were forbidden from cathedral performance. For example, William Walton's 1931 *Belshazzar's Feast* was banned for 25 years, allegedly for its mention of eunuchs and concubines.⁴⁶ Composers were astutely aware of this ecclesiastical basis when submitting works for the festival. Finzi, himself to become a staple at the festival in the years surrounding World War II, was aware of this problem, with the composer noting in a

⁴⁵ Watkins Shaw and John C. Phillips, 'Three Choirs Festival' in *Grove Music Online*. Accessed 13 Nov. 2008 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/27901>>

⁴⁶ Lewis Foreman, 'Walton's Words' in *William Walton: Music and Literature*. ed. R. Steward Craggs (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). 234. Hereafter cited as Foreman.

1949 letter to Tony Scott that the opening lines of *For St. Cecilia* referring to the saint as ‘delightful goddess’ would banish the work from the festival.⁴⁷

Similarly large works based on English texts, commissioned as a result of a flourishing choral festival scene in England, appeared throughout the first half of the twentieth-century, arguably culminating in 1930 with the premiere of *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, George Dyson’s epic setting of Chaucer’s *General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*. In this work, the composer draws upon the conventions and scale of oratorio – storytelling and dramatic description, using thematic motifs and word painting. Yet in setting a great work of English literature, Dyson was to disregard any notion of the work being devotional, focussing instead on the characters described within Chaucer’s text.

Composers and the public no longer felt it necessary to include a Christian element in works of this length, and it is works such as Dyson’s *Canterbury Pilgrims*, a work considered one of the greatest in the English language, that set a formidable precedent for Gerald Finzi in his decision to set Wordsworth’s *Ode: Intimations of Immortality upon Recollections of Early Childhood*. Indeed, to fully understand the context of Finzi’s setting, one must survey his complete works for these forces. *Intimations of Immortality* was arguably the third of Finzi’s four major works employing soloists, chorus and orchestra, although two sacred works, *Lo the Full, Final Sacrifice*, a setting of two amalgamated poems by Richard Crashaw, and his setting of the *Magnificat*, were also scored for orchestra in addition to the more familiar organ accompaniment heard more often today. There were also a number of earlier compositions for similar forces, which were either withdrawn or disowned by the composer, but which nevertheless require study for the emergence of thematic similarities. However, by the time that Finzi was to premiere *Intimations of Immortality* in 1950, the public’s taste for large-scale choral works had diminished, to the point where critics suggested he was writing

⁴⁷Banfield, 353.

in an antiquated idiom, Martin Cooper writing in the 1950 *Musical Times* that he was ‘the epigone of an already epigonic generation.’⁴⁸

A number of factors have been suggested for the decline in festive odes or oratorios; the rise of the symphony as the ‘musical overlord’, the increasing popularity of gramophone recordings and the overall cost of mounting a large-scale choral performance.⁴⁹ However, the two world wars are generally accepted to be the major contributors to the decline, even if they were to inspire many of the works of the following decades – Bliss, Holst, Delius, Vaughan Williams and Finzi being inspired both emotionally and musically by the events of 1914-1918 in their works written during the inter-war period, with similarly conciliatory works written by other composers following the second. The fact remained, though, that compared to the huge number of provincial choral festivals extant at the turn of the century, only a handful of the larger festivals, for example Leeds or the Three Choirs, were left.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Martin Cooper, quoted in McVeagh, 191.

⁴⁹ Charles Reid, ‘Britain from Stanford to Vaughan Williams: c.1880-1939’ in *Choral Music: A Symposium*, ed. Arthur Jacobs (London: Penguin Books, 1979). 266.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 339

Chapter II – Early works

Finzi's first compositions were mainly vocal, and while at York Minster under Bairstow he composed a number of short anthems such as the Christmas anthem 'Beyond the Paling of the Stars', a setting of Christina Rossetti.⁵¹ During this period he achieved his first publications – the Hardy song cycle *By Footpath and Stile* of 1922, followed by two choral works discussed in this section – 'The Brightness of this Day' and the *Two Motets*. Finzi was given important early encouragement under Bairstow, although the two were not close. In Francis Jackson's biography of Bairstow, *Blessed City*, Finzi barely warrants a mention:

More than once ECB included a piece of Finzi's in his choral concerts. After a few years Finzi left ECB to study with R O Morris. It appears that he could have been rather disenchanted with the strict methods employed by Bairstow, or at any rate felt the need of some sort of change. He was scarcely ever mentioned by ECB, and none of his works were in the repertoire of the Minster choir.⁵²

However, as Stephen Banfield acknowledges in *An English Composer*, Bairstow's disciplined teaching style and the importance of Finzi's assimilation of organ accompaniment writing was crucial to his development.⁵³

Finzi's most notable work of the era, and certainly the most ambitious in scope and topic is the *Requiem da Camera* (also known at one point as the *Elegies*), which was not published during his lifetime, despite numerous attempts. Retrospective study of the work reveals many tropes he was to use in later compositions, and this forms the core of this section.

⁵¹ Banfield, 47.

⁵² Francis Jackson, *Blessed City - The Life and Works of Edward C. Bairstow* (York: William Sessions, 1993). 128.

⁵³ Banfield, 434.

i. *Requiem da Camera* (1924, with later revisions)

Finzi's *Requiem da Camera* of 1924 was perhaps his first work of great substance. Despite its ostensive description as a 'requiem', the work is entirely secular in nature, and not intended for a liturgical performance. It is a setting of three poems on the subject of war by John Masefield, Thomas Hardy and Wilfred Wilson Gibson, two of whom were members of the 'Georgian poets', a movement of British poets popular in the first half of the century, whose texts were often chosen for song-setting.⁵⁴ These movements are linked by shared thematic material, and introduced by an overture-like prelude based on the melodic material of the later movements, a characteristic feature of Finzi's extended vocal works. Indeed, although the *Requiem da Camera* is one of Finzi's earliest works for choir and his first combined usage of choral and orchestral forces, the *Requiem* already displays elements which were to become quintessential to the composer's later oeuvre.

Finzi was to draw upon a relatively new concept in assembling a work of thematically-linked poems by various authors. The assembly of thematically similar works into an 'anthology' was, as noted by Lewis Foreman in *William Walton: Music and Literature*, probably first invented by Henry Walford Davies, although as noted by Foreman usually attributed to Sir Arthur Bliss;

The tradition of assembling thematic anthologies of literature in English from several poets and writers...was possibly first invented by Walford Davies, but was really a phenomenon of the 1930s and was notably a creation of Sir Arthur Bliss in his *Pastoral: Lie Strewn the White Flocks*.⁵⁵

Bliss was later to assemble his own choral war memorial in his *Morning Heroes* of 1930. By comparison, Finzi's composition of 1924 is an early, but minor inclusion into this canon.

⁵⁴ Banfield, 66

⁵⁵ Foreman, 233.

The work is inextricably linked to Finzi's early composition tutor Ernest Farrar (1885-1918), whose death in World War I this work commemorates ('in memoriam E.B.F'). Howard Ferguson notes that amongst his earliest works, this one was particularly personal for Finzi.⁵⁶ It was one of several works commemorating Ernest Farrar, including Frank Bridge's *Piano Sonata*, Harry Gill's song 'In Memoriam' and Julian Clifford's tone poem *Lights Out*.⁵⁷ The structure of Finzi's *Requiem* in four movements owes more than a passing nod to his teacher, who himself set works of literature for choir and orchestra. Farrar's early work *The Blessed Damsel* (1907) sets Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem for orchestra, chorus and soprano soloist, utilising techniques Farrar learnt under the tutorage of Charles Villiers Stanford.⁵⁸ Unlike this, Finzi's *Requiem da Camera* is not integrated as an entire sweeping gesture but constructed of component movements, and in this respect it is most akin to some of Farrar's later works such as his 1915 *Out of Doors* (op.14), a three movement setting of Walt Whitman for choir and orchestra, a work published posthumously in 1923.⁵⁹

In terms of Farrar's influence on the young composer, Stephen Banfield notes that it is likely that he was killed before his pupil truly assimilated his style, and he argues that it was the fact of Farrar's death and a wish on the part of his pupil to pay tribute to him that led to the composition of the *Requiem da Camera*, rather than the creation of a direct musical homage, although Banfield has noted several quotations from Farrar appearing in Finzi's part-songs.⁶⁰ These include Finzi's 1953 part-song 'White flowering days', which utilises a direct quotation from Farrar's 'Margaritae Sorori':⁶¹

⁵⁶ Howard Ferguson, 'Biography' in *Gerald Finzi: A Bio-bibliography*. ed. J.C. Dressler (London: Greenwood Press, 1997). 6

⁵⁷ Adrian Officer, 'Who Was Ernest Farrar?' in *The Lads in Their Hundreds* (Recital programme, 1984). 7-12.

⁵⁸ Ernest Farrar, *The Blessed Damsel* for Solo Voice, Chorus & Orchestra (London: Stainer & Bell, 1907).

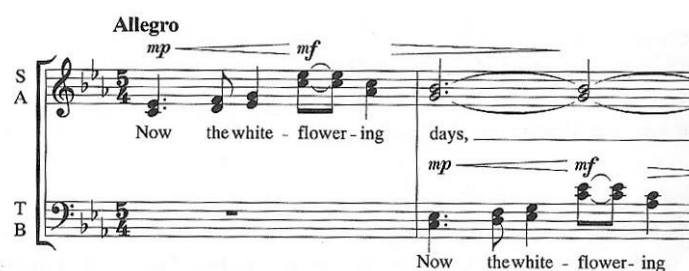
⁵⁹ Ernest Farrar, *Out of Doors* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1923).

⁶⁰ Banfield, 442

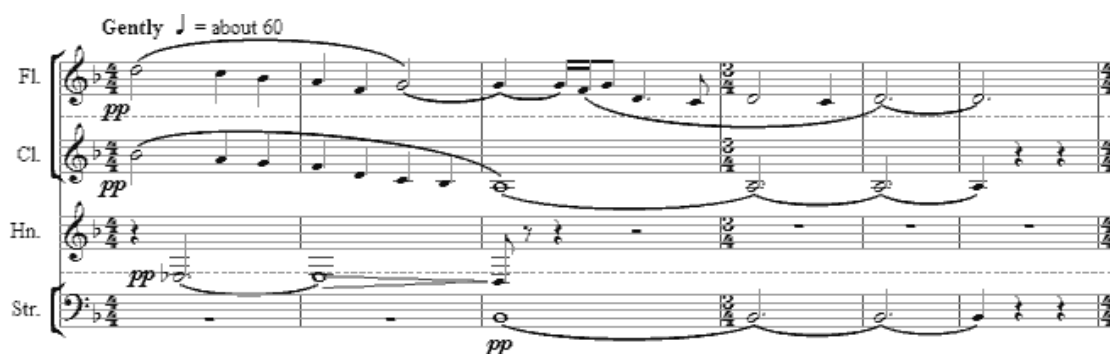
⁶¹ Banfield, 16.



Fig. 2.1 Farrar, 'Margaritae Sorori' bars 4-6.

Fig. 2.2 Finzi, 'White flowering days' bars 1-2.⁶²

In addition, Finzi's op.2, *A Severn Rhapsody* is from the same 'pastoral' sound world of Farrar's *English Pastoral Impressions*, particularly 'Bredon Hill'; the triadic woodwinds, the canonic part changes as well as the overall theme of the work all hint at the influence of his teacher. The part writing splits between woodwinds (usually flute and clarinet) in thirds are particularly reminiscent of Farrar's 'Bredon Hill':

Fig. 2.3 Finzi, *A Severn Rhapsody*, bars 1-6.⁶³

⁶² Ibid. 442.

⁶³ Gerald Finzi, *A Severn Rhapsody* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1976). 1.

Requiem da Camera's literal translation 'A Chamber Requiem' betrays Finzi's intention that the work should be for a small chamber choir, although his scoring for an orchestra of the same forces as his op.2 *A Severn Rhapsody* belies this designation.⁶⁴ As Philip Thomas notes, the vocal and orchestral parts are kept independent, particularly in the setting of Masfield.⁶⁵ The work is now grouped with *A Severn Rhapsody* the two pieces being performed in the same year and posthumously listed in Finzi's opus as 'English pastorals and elegies'. In particular, the *Requiem* Prelude shares many characteristics of the *Rhapsody*. Throughout the 1920s, Finzi strived to have the work published in the *Carnegie Collection of British Music*, where his *Severn Rhapsody* had been published in 1924.⁶⁶ In 1928, he wrote to Ferguson:

They turned down my poor old Cinderella-of-a-Requiem a second time. I should really begin to think it a bad work and destroy it, if the recipients had not been Rootham and Stanley Wilson – neither of whom is worth tuppence.⁶⁷

The fragmentary compositional history of the work is typical of Finzi, an affliction which he suffered throughout his career. The first movement was performed in 1925, alongside the similar *Severn Rhapsody*, and was probably composed in 1924-5. However, Finzi had composed 'Only a Man Harrowing Clods' in January 1923, and had made alterations based on suggestions by Edward Bairstow and Vaughan Williams.⁶⁸ *Requiem da Camera* was begun while Finzi was under the tutorship of Edward Bairstow at York Minster, with whom he had enrolled, albeit reluctantly, following the enlistment of Ernest Farrar. This gives a small glimpse of their working relationship, with Stephen Banfield relating that the solo part

⁶⁴ Banfield, 87.

⁶⁵ Philip Thomas, 'Requiem da Camera' in *The Clock of the Years: A Gerald and Joy Finzi Anthology*. Ed. Rolf Jordan, (Lichfield: Chosen Press, 2007). 114.

⁶⁶ Anon., Special collections: *The Carnegie Collection of British Music* at King's College, University of London. <<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/iss/library/speccoll/carnegie.html>>

⁶⁷ Gerald Finzi, Letter dated 22nd April 1928 in Ferguson, Howard & Hurd, Michael (eds), *Letters of Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001). 29.

⁶⁸ Banfield, 88.

in ‘Only a man harrowing clods’ was criticised by Bairstow as being out of range for an average baritone, suggesting that ‘only a very few have voices of abnormal compass’.⁶⁹ According to Trevor Hold, Bairstow introduced Finzi to the songs of Ivor Gurney, with the song ‘Sleep’ in particular being an influence on the composer’s song writing.⁷⁰

In the bar 36 of the second movement, we perhaps see another demonstration of Finzi’s inexperience of setting vocal music, with a bass line which is set below the range of average basses, with a sustained D2. However, it is arguable that it does show a wish in the young composer to avoid compromising an effect, namely of utilising only the lower vocal ranges in each part to illustrate a particular poetic phrase, something he was to continue in later works.

Other than the first movement, the work was left unperformed during Finzi’s lifetime and only resurrected by Philip Thomas in 1984.⁷¹ A full ‘chamber’ performance of the work by the Alan Cuckston Singers took place in Harrogate in 1985 to commemorate the Farrar centenary, and in-keeping with Finzi’s direction that it could be for solo singers, it featured a single vocalist on each part, accompanied by Finzi’s piano reduction.⁷² This probably included Howard Ferguson’s arrangement of the first movement for piano duet, discussed in correspondence in 1927.⁷³ The full orchestral version remained unperformed until 1990, and was issued in print and on Compact Disc in 1992 in a version conducted by Richard Hickox.⁷⁴

The opening movement is woven from melodic strands from the three later movements, particularly the third and fourth movements, in a style that Finzi was to use

⁶⁹ Banfield, 93.

⁷⁰ Hold, 396.

⁷¹ Banfield, 88.

⁷² Programme note for Ernest Bristow Farrar 1885-1918, Centenary Concert held at St. Wilfred’s Church Harrogate, Sunday 7th July 1985. 3.

⁷³ Howard Ferguson, Letter dated 21st December 1927 in Ferguson, Howard & Hurd, Michael (eds), *Letters of Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001). Subsequent letters are quoted as ‘sender-recipient, date’.

⁷⁴ Banfield, 88.

throughout his compositional career, notably in the ‘Intrada’ from *Dies Natalis* and the introduction to *Intimations of Immortality*. The opening prelude is crucial to the work, functioning as the link that binds the three vocal movements, which motivically share little in common. There are also component elements which hint at the subject matter of the *Requiem*, quoting Finzi’s own completed works and those of other composers. The most prominent dedication is the quotation which appears in bars 12-13, which is highly redolent of George Butterworth’s ‘Loveliest of Trees’, the song on which Butterworth based his orchestral rhapsody *A Shropshire Lad*:

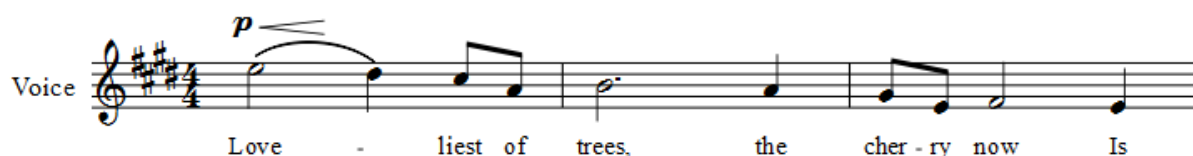


Fig. 2.4 Butterworth, ‘Loveliest of trees’ from *A Shropshire Lad*, bars 4-6.⁷⁵



Fig. 2.5 Finzi, ‘Prelude’ from *Requiem da Camera*, bars 11-12.⁷⁶

The melody is almost certainly a reference to the Butterworth setting, with identical intervals appearing in several of Finzi’s early works. However, in this example the overall melodic content is overshadowed by a completely different tonal basis. The motif also appears briefly in bar eight of the final movement. Given Butterworth’s parallel death to Farrar in World War I, Finzi’s incorporation of a tribute to the composer is highly likely. Indeed, Diana McVeagh suggests that the motive behind the work was not merely a tribute to Farrar, but to those artists who were lost, including Butterworth.⁷⁷ Both Banfield and McVeagh note this quotation, labelling it as the ‘cherry tree motif’ (from Houseman’s opening line ‘loveliest of trees, the cherry now’). Finzi had already used the motif before, most strikingly as a recurring

⁷⁵ George Butterworth, *Eleven Houseman Songs* (Texas: Recital Publications, 1989). 3.

⁷⁶ Gerald Finzi, *Requiem da Camera*, ed. Phillip Thomas (York: Banks Music Publications, 1992). 3-4.

⁷⁷ McVeagh, 31.

thematic element in an early Finzi song ‘Tall Nettles’, written circa 1920, a setting of the poem by Edward Thomas, another casualty of the conflict:



Ex. 2.6 Finzi, ‘Tall Nettles’.⁷⁸

Of course, we must consider that in this earlier setting Finzi was also writing in tribute of Butterworth, something that Stephen Banfield suspects in his brief review of the song.⁷⁹ However, the context of the Thomas poem, a pastoral image of an overgrown country farmyard, mirrors the imagery of the Masfield poem of the ‘cracks un-plastered in the leaking walls’, and the inclusion of the quotation in the introduction perhaps hints that Finzi had considered its inclusion alongside the Hardy song, which also compositionally predated the choral movements.⁸⁰ Finzi also included the motif in the opening to his 1923 *Severn Rhapsody*:



Fig. 2.7 Finzi, *A Severn Rhapsody*, bars 1-3.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Gerald Finzi, ‘Tall Nettles’ in *In Years Defaced* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 2001).

⁷⁹ Banfield, 40-42.

⁸⁰ Philip Thomas, ‘Requiem da Camera’ in *The Clock of the Years: A Gerald and Joy Finzi Anthology*. Ed. Rolf Jordan (Lichfield: Chosen Press, 2007). 113-114.

⁸¹ Gerald Finzi, *A Severn Rhapsody* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1976). 1.

We also find a melodic reference to his first published work, *By Footpath and Stile* in the descending motif used in ‘The Oxen’, which, although not an exact facsimile, is illustrative of the vocal style used by the composer:



Fig. 2.8 Finzi, ‘The Oxen’ from *By Footpath and Stile*.⁸²



Fig. 2.9 Finzi, ‘Prelude’ from *Requiem da Camera*, bar 55

However, it is with the *Severn Rhapsody* that the *Requiem*, and in particular the ‘Prelude’, shares many stylistic similarities, being also written while Finzi was residing in Painswick, Gloucestershire.⁸³ The two works are even grouped together with the *Requiem* as ‘Opus 3: English Pastorals and Elegies’ in Finzi’s catalogue.⁸⁴ A *Severn Rhapsody*, although being a pastoral idyll, shares something of the work’s melancholy. Even the quotation from Rupert Brooke’s 1912 poem *The Old Vicarage, Grantchester*: ‘Stands the Church clock at ten to three? And is there honey still for tea?’ is telling, Brooke himself being a noteworthy casualty of the First War (although both Banfield and McVeagh question Finzi’s use of the quotation; Banfield implying that he may not have understood Brooke’s half-satiric usage, McVeagh suggesting the quotation was at odds with his later viewpoint).⁸⁵⁸⁶ On the manuscript of this piece in the Bodleian Library, the composer has written after the final bars:

To know all is to forgive all !/? G.F.⁸⁷

⁸² Gerald Finzi, *By Footpath and Stile* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1982). 20-21.

⁸³ McVeagh, 28.

⁸⁴ Banfield, 79.

⁸⁵ Banfield, 78.

⁸⁶ McVeagh, 28.

⁸⁷ Gerald Finzi, autograph manuscript of *A Severn Rhapsody*, circa 1924 (Bodleian Library) MSS Mus b.33.

Whether this is a self-deprecating comment written by the composer in later life in reference to his later dissatisfaction with the work (Finzi wrote in a letter to Ferguson in 1940 of his disappointment at the work being included in his catalogue) or whether this is a comment describing the subject is unclear.⁸⁸ Certainly, the work is not as idyllic in sound-world as Butterworth's *Banks of Green Willow*, but the more melancholic rhapsody *A Shropshire Lad*. Also relevant here is Vaughan Williams' notion of the 'pastoral' in terms of a scarred, war-torn environment as depicted in his 1922 *Pastoral Symphony* (*Symphony No. 3*). As Wilfred Mellers writes of that symphony:

Its pastoral elements have nothing to do with cows looking over gates, as jibbers used to suggest: or at least if an English rural landscape is implicit, so – according to the composer, more directly – are the desolate battlefields of Flanders, where the piece was first embryonically conceived.⁸⁹

With reference to Finzi's later opus classification, his 1924 *Requiem* is certainly in this vein. Taking the first bars as an example, the movement begins with a curiously complex motif in the viola section, which emerges again at bar 30 in imitative repetition between the clarinet, viola and cello. Otherwise, the motif is slightly anomalous, not quoting any of the following movements. At bar three, the plodding, repetitive bass note (E) begins, referring to the opening of the third movement, while the stepwise motif at 6 refers to the opening of the fourth. The melody of 'only a man harrowing clods' is also heard in the cello and clarinet sections, circa bar 11. This is followed by a quotation from the second movement 'the harvest not yet won' and the 'loveliest of trees' motif.

Below is a rough plan of the most prominent quotations from the vocal movements discernable in the 'Prelude', although these are not allocated by timing. Others are hidden

⁸⁸ Finzi-Ferguson, 16th July, 204.

⁸⁹ Wilfred Mellers, *Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion* (London: Barrie & Jenkins 1989). 87.

internally within the score, and others are hinted rather than fully stated, such as the second appearance of the ‘Loveliest of trees’ motif at bar 55.

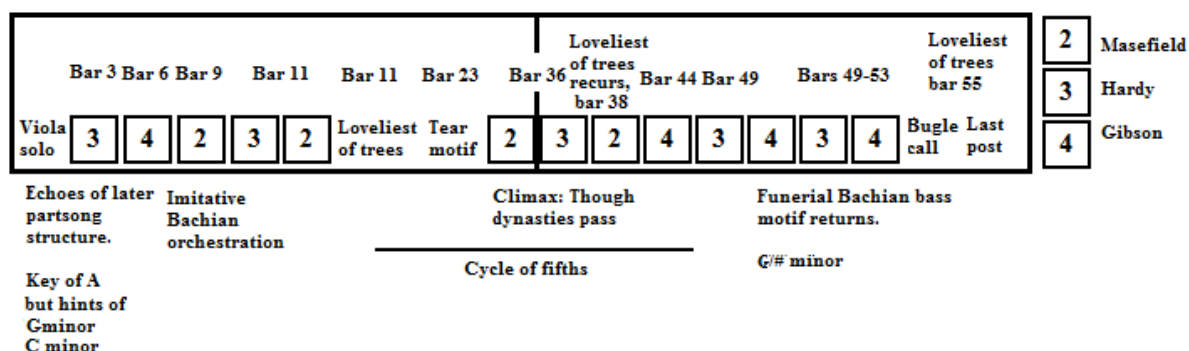


Fig 2.10 Diagram of motif quotations in the ‘Prelude’ to *Requiem da Camera*.

The second movement is based upon the poem ‘August, 1914’ by John Masfield, published in his collected works in October 1923, although possibly printed elsewhere earlier (in the *Collected Poems of John Masfield*, it is grouped as *Phillip the King and other poems*, suggesting an earlier individual publication.)⁹⁰ The poem itself is fitting as the opening text for Finzi’s *Requiem*; rather than highlighting the war itself, the poem offers an image of the pastoral landscape which will be left by the generation of young men called to war. The movement is through-composed, allowing the composer several opportunities for musical gestures illustrating the poetry. For the initial material, Finzi sets the poem as a part-song, and a sparsely composed one at that, with only brief appearances of the orchestra until the forces are combined at bar 43. The time signature of the opening changes constantly, and it is apparent from these (7/4, 5/4, 3/4, 4/4 appear within the first four bars) that the text has dictated the setting. The first bars are largely homophonic, and initially only for soprano, alto and bass. One is perhaps reminded of the homophonic, repetitive opening of Stanford’s *The Blue Bird* (op.119). The movement opens in A minor, following the ambiguous C major impression (albeit without a qualifying triadic third) of the first movement. The entry of the

⁹⁰ John Masfield, *The Collected Poems of John Masfield* (London, Toronto: William Heinemann Ltd, 1923). 372.

orchestra in bar 23 is heralded by a semi-tonic key change to Ab minor. Stephen Banfield notes that the B natural is particularly crucial to the effect Finzi achieves in the first orchestral insert:

The return of the orchestra...is equally magical, when a cadence note (the tenors' B natural), expected to be the root of a triad is underpinned as the minor third.⁹¹

He also suggests that the first orchestral insert is reminiscent of Butterworth's orchestral rhapsody *A Shropshire Lad*, the opening material of which is based on 'Loveliest of Trees', referenced first in the opening thematic material. However, one almost feels that the ascending fifths in the opening could almost be based on bugle calls, perhaps referencing the 'Last Post' motif found in the Prelude:

Fig 2.11 'August 1914', bar 19

The motif used in Fig 2.13 is found throughout the movement, found also at bar 39. As the orchestral interlude ends at bar 22, the key drops another semitone to G minor. Although the piece is not strophic, the opening thematic material appears again in a developed form. The

⁹¹ Banfield, 89.

part-writing is much closer together, being for alto, tenor and bass, all within one triad. The melodic content is highly pictorial, for example the crotchet pause before ‘flagging’ in ‘rooks from harvest flagging as they fly’. A particularly high point of the movement is the almost chant-like setting of ‘so beautiful it is’ in bar 30, before a pause and a more complex piece of part-song writing, to the point that one cannot help but wonder if this was influenced by the Anglican preces and responses Finzi would have encountered during lessons with Edward Bairstow. The piece itself follows a largely semi-tonic harmonic structure, rising by semitone for each grouping of text, which subliminally suggests the unrest and build up implied by the poem.

The element that is most interesting about the *Requiem da Camera*, and in particular this movement, is the extent to which we can see elements of melodic and stylistic interest which hint that Finzi had already found his compositional ‘voice’ at such an early stage of development. Finzi was only twenty three when the work was completed, yet there are numerous examples of his characteristic melodic vocal lines. The section from 32-33 is probably the first appearance of a motif often found in Finzi’s later works; compare ‘English fields’ with the phrasing of ‘I nothing in the world did know’ from ‘Wonder’ in his 1940 *Dies Natalis*, with its a characteristic triad descent, although also note that the later work has lost the reliance of unusual time signatures, instead rendering difficult rhythms with triplets within a standard 3/4 time;

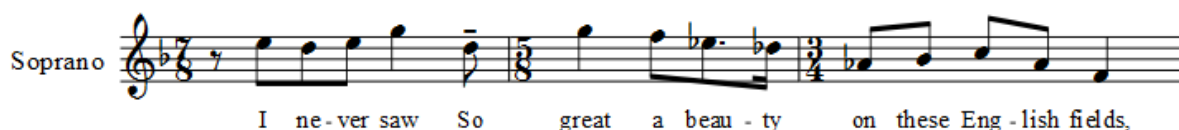


Fig. 2.18 Finzi, 'August 1914', bars 30-32.



Fig. 2.19 Finzi, 'Wonder' from *Dies Natalis*, bars 45-47.⁹²

However, a similar paradigm had been more obliquely evident in the piano accompaniment for the song 'Tall Nettles'. Notice the descending upper line, contrasting the rising second inversion chordal pattern:

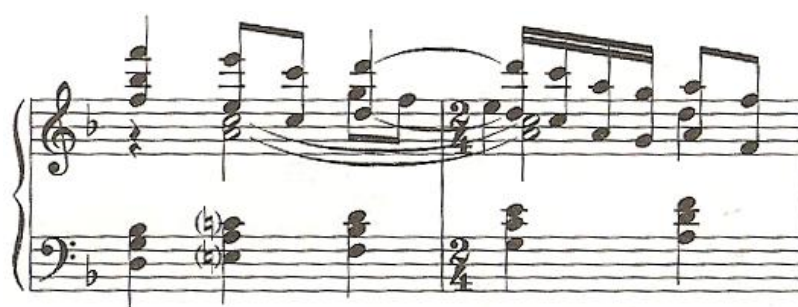


Fig. 2.20 Finzi, 'Tall Nettles'.⁹³

Similarly, the plodding bass accompaniment used in the first and third movements was to be used by Finzi in many of his later song accompaniments and orchestral pieces. In particular, the *Prelude for String Orchestra*, originally composed in 1926-1929 as part of a triptych called *The Bud, the Blossom and the Berry*, shares the same plodding bass accompaniment as the first and third movements of the *Requiem*.

⁹² Gerald Finzi, 'Wonder' from *Dies Natalis* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1946).

⁹³ Gerald Finzi, 'Tall Nettles' in *In Years Defaced* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 2001).

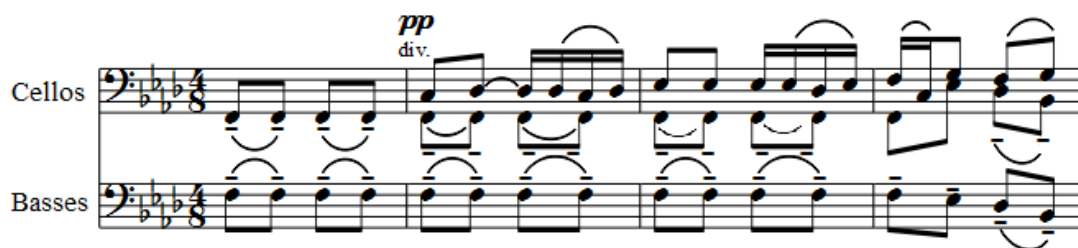


Fig. 2.21 *Prelude for String Orchestra*, bars 1-4⁹⁴

Other quotations also appear, for example a melodic reference to the line ‘the tilted stacks, the beasts in pen’:



Fig. 2.22 ‘August 1914’, 46-48



Fig. 2.23 *Prelude for String Orchestra*, bars 28-31⁹⁵

Given that Finzi still had the *Requiem* fresh in his mind, according to his correspondence with Ferguson, the inclusion of this idiomatic phrase cannot be coincidence.

The movement ends with a chilling echo of the motif first heard in bar 19, transformed into D# minor. The top notes of the pianissimo strings are altered using synthetic harmonics to sound weaker, more futile, while violins one and two remain in close harmony. The final chord feels unresolved, due to the added fourth replacing the expected minor third.

⁹⁴ Gerald Finzi, *Prelude for String Orchestra* (Boosey & Hawkes, 1958).

⁹⁵ Gerald Finzi, *Prelude for String Orchestra* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1958).

Fig. 2.12 'August 1914', bars 96-100

The effect was one that Finzi had used to conclude the early cycle *By Footpath and Stile* of 1923, although here only the violin part featured the harmonic. Also in common between the two conclusions is the second position interval of the concluding chords in the bass parts, and the interval of a fourth used in the upper part.

Fig. 2.13 'Exeunt Omnes' from *By Footpath and Stile*, bars 73-83.⁹⁶

Curiously, assuming that Finzi was using John Masefield's first edition collected works, he ends his setting at the end of a page, and indeed in the middle of a sentence – the original text featuring a comma after 'English shore'. Indeed, his setting concludes before Masefield's

⁹⁶ Gerald Finzi, *By Footpath and Stile* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1982).

verses dealing with the experience of war, keeping the movement, in line with the other poems, very much ‘in England’.⁹⁷

The central song ‘In the Time of the Breaking of Nations’ (‘Only a man harrowing clods’) was composed in 1923, before the choral movements, as a solo song with pianoforte accompaniment.⁹⁸ Hardy’s poem was first published in 1915, but relates an experience of ‘an agricultural incident’ the poet witnessed in 1870 during the Franco-Prussian war; it has been suggested that the ‘wight’ (man) of the final stanza is the poet.⁹⁹ Finzi was apparently dissatisfied with the song, and considered removing it, Howard Ferguson writing to him in 1928:

I am sorry to hear of the decease of the song in the Requiem, though I didn’t know it well enough to say that I am deeply grieved.¹⁰⁰

Finzi later revised the song, but left only a fragmentary section of an orchestration completed.¹⁰¹ The work was salvaged in 1982 by Philip Thomas, who orchestrated the revised version of the song, only ‘composing one note’, which is the C natural in bar 27. However, the necessity of editorial decision in Finzi’s works, particularly those early works which the composer left unpublished, is quite commonplace – Howard Ferguson notes several examples where he had to correct Finzi’s revised manuscripts, such as a mistaken transposition in a revision of his early song cycle *By Footpath and Stile*.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ John Masfield, *The Collected Poems of John Masfield* (London, Toronto: William Heinemann Ltd, 1923). 372-374.

⁹⁸ Phillip Thomas, CD liner note for Gerald Finzi, *Requiem da camera* (Colchester: Chandos Records, 1991) CHAN208997. 4.

⁹⁹ Dennis Taylor, ‘Hardy’s Apocalypse’ in *Hardy’s Poetry: 1860-1928*, second edition (London: Macmillan, 1989). 88-90.

¹⁰⁰ Howard Ferguson, Letter dated 3rd January 1928 in Ferguson, Howard & Hurd, Michael (eds), *Letters of Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001).

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Gerald Finzi, *By Footpath and Stile*, ed. Howard Ferguson (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1982). 9.

The movement features a plodding, repetitive pedal note in the strings, a motif Finzi was to utilise greatly in later works. Again, a passing resemblance can be made to Farrar's *Heroic Elegy*, although given that the composer may not have heard this, this is perhaps superficial. The setting roughly follows the three stanza structure of Hardy's poem.

Examination of the early song reveals that, like other early Finzi songs, it shows promise, but inexperience. Like the song 'Tall Nettles', Finzi makes particular use of unusual syncopated phrasing and triplets in both the melodic line and the accompaniment. It also uses typical early Finzi changes of time signature – beginning in 4/4, switching between 3/4, 5/4 and 2/4 at regular intervals.

Howard Ferguson recollects in his introduction to Finzi in Dressler's bio-bibliography that Finzi's revised version (included in the 1992 published version) is quite different from the 1923 original (A full transcription of the 1923 song from the manuscript in the Bodleian Library is included as an appendix to this thesis).¹⁰³ Ferguson's assertion is only half correct, as the revised song still bears a strong resemblance to the 1923 version, and is more akin to a re-composition or heavy revision than a completely new work, as it keeps certain elements of the original almost intact. The opening stanza of the poem is roughly the same as the published version, other than a few small revisions and embellishments. This implies that Finzi was satisfied with his original setting of the opening lines, or perhaps that he wished to keep the bass motif, which he had used prominently in the 'Prelude', intact.

Finzi's setting of the first stanza is almost exactly the same in both versions, although the original is in the key of D minor (the later revision is in Bb minor). One suspects this change may have been due to Bairstow's earlier criticism of the vocal range, detailed earlier –

¹⁰³ Howard Ferguson, 'Biography' in *Gerald Finzi: A Bio-bibliography*. ed. J.C. Dressler (London: Greenwood Press, 1997). 6.

in bar 35 of his original song, the baritone is expected to hit F4, out of the comfortable range for this voice, and perhaps evidence of Finzi's youthful inexperience.¹⁰⁴

The revised movement opens in Bb minor, almost emphatically so with its repeated pedal note. As in the previous movement, the vocal line is the predominant influence upon both the rhythm and melodic contours of the piece, for example with shifts between 4/4 and 3/4 from figures 4-8, a trend also evident throughout the choral 'August 1914'. In the 1923 edition, the key initially remains centred on D minor, bridging at bar 12 into G minor for the second verse, which retains a similar feel.

The central section of the song at bar 30 beginning 'Only thin smoke without flame' is almost completely changed. From the continually altering 5/4 – 4/4 time signature, the later setting's time signature is standardised to 9/8, enabling the excessive triplets of the earlier setting to be incorporated. The time signature also gives this stanza the more definitive impression of being in three, no longer implying the plodding of the bass. Before the second line of the poem, a short orchestral bridge is used which raises the key to Eb minor, using a searching rising motif. The proceeding viola solo mirrors the text, suggesting the 'thin smoke without flame'. In the next phrase 'dynasties pass', Finzi uses a motif he favoured for revelatory passages, for example 'the sun then burst' from 'Childhood Amongst the Ferns' in *Before and After Summer*, noticeably missing from the 1923 edition, perhaps implying that the revised song was influenced by this later Hardy setting. The most noticeable difference is the final stanza of the 1923 song, which is completely alien to those familiar with the revised edition, being in a different key, and featuring a markedly different setting:

¹⁰⁴ Banfield, 93.

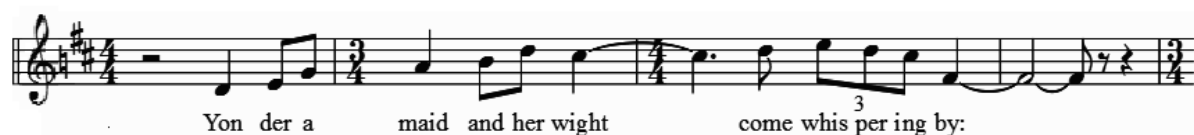


Fig. 2.14 'Only a man harrowing clods', 1923 edition



Fig. 2.15 'Only a man harrowing clods', revised edition

Notice how the 1923 edition features complicated time-signature changes, compared to the 'cleaner' revised edition. The melodic line itself is simplified; the odd climax of the octave on 'her' falling to a seventh is replaced by a triadic motif centred on the root. Indeed the only elements that remain intact are the triplet rhythm for 'whispering', although even this is twice as long in the revised song, and the conclusion of the phrase a third higher. For the final stanza, the bridge section returns the key to its original Bb minor. However, the mood is subtly altered to give the impression of a major key, perhaps Db major, this effect largely created by the melodic lines beginning and ending on either Ab or Db. The final passage uses the plodding motif to fade into pianissimo, also using a third, perhaps to hint at the last post motif. An examination of the 1923 song manuscript reveals the influence of Ralph Vaughan Williams; a small addition marked as 'V Williams suggests' shows a different, less conclusive end to the song, with the plodding bass fading into nothing, or perhaps the next movement seamlessly, rather than on a quiet triad. Evidently Finzi heeded Vaughan Williams' advice, as this is how the revised version also concludes.

The final movement is a setting of Wilfred Wilson Gibson's 'Lament' from *Whin*, a collection of poems mainly relating to places in Northumberland, which was published in 1918.¹⁰⁵ Gibson, a 'Georgian' poet, was also set by Ivor Gurney, for example 'Black Stichel', also from *Whin*. Gurney was to later be the focus of Finzi's instinct of preservation.

¹⁰⁵ W.W. Gibson, *Whin* (London; MacMillan, 1918).

The movement is predominately in the unusual time signature of 5/4, although the rhythmic meter of the opening suggests that it is divided into two bar phrases, creating an implication of walking, continuing the throbbing bass of the third movement; the plodding theme of the Hardy song is mirrored in the opening of the final movement. The setting is the most polyphonic of the movements, with the setting of 'happily on the sun or feel the rain' featuring particularly complicated polyphonic part writing, something the composer was to use in many choral compositions, even up to 'Glory to God in the highest' in *In Terra Pax*. One could argue that this section blurs the clarity of the text, although it is perhaps intended to illustrate the implied plurality of the verse as an all-encompassing experience ('how shall we look'), rather than that of the individual implied the Masfield setting ('*I* never saw so great a beauty')

The tonality of the movement is G minor, although C minor, which was also important in the Prelude, is the key in which the work concludes. At bar 15, Finzi mirrors his setting of 'and so by ship to sea' of movement 2 by including a brief soprano solo, which also uses the falling triad. Given the polyphony of the movement, the part-song following this solo (which moves the tonality from G minor to D minor) is a strikingly quiet, almost hymn-like conclusion to the choral part.

At the end, there is a meandering duet between the clarinet and horn, each playing intervals associated with the 'Last Post' bugle call. Before the last post, however, is an unexpected flash of colour in the guise of a major chord, which fades into the dissonant underscore. The inclusion of the Last Post bugle call in bars 67-69 mirrors Farrar's usage of the same call in bars 3-6 and towards the end of his late orchestral work *Heroic Elegy* 'For Soldiers', premiered during Farrar's last visit to Harrogate before leaving for the front.



Fig. 2.16 'Last Post' bugle call in *Heroic Elegy*, bars 3-6.¹⁰⁶



Fig. 2.17 Finzi, 'We Who Are Left' from *Requiem da Camera*, bars 49-53.¹⁰⁷

Whether this influenced the conclusion of the *Requiem* is debatable, as Finzi apparently had to enquire to Ferguson about military bugle calls, and appears to have been unfamiliar with the work when he attempted to collect together Farrar's papers in January 1953.¹⁰⁸ However, one imagines it would have been unlikely that Farrar's pupil would have missed the chance to hear his teacher's piece, given their close relationship; with the premiere of the *Heroic Elegy* being held on Farrar's last visit to Harrogate before going to the France in 1918, it is difficult to imagine that Finzi would have been unaware of the work.

The whole movement has elements which are reminiscent of textural ideas used in Vaughan Williams' 1922 *Pastoral Symphony*, although whether this is coincidental is debatable. Of particular note is the duet between the horn and the woodwind section in the final bars of Finzi's *Requiem*, which are both conceptually and aurally similar to the horn's recapitulation of the earlier natural trumpet solo in the second movement of the *Pastoral Symphony*. Whether the two composers came to use the contrapuntal interplay of the woodwind and brass through independent thinking, or whether Finzi was inspired by Vaughan Williams is unclear (as noted, Farrar used this idea in 1918). Other elements, such as the melodic line of the solo sopranos and the bass accompaniment also hint at a crossover.

¹⁰⁶ Ernest Farrar, *Heroic Elegy* (Unpublished manuscript: Harrogate, 1918).

¹⁰⁷ Gerald Finzi, *Requiem da Camera* (York: Banks Music Publications, 1992), 27.

¹⁰⁸ Letter to Olive Farrar, quoted in Diana McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 214.

ii. Other early choral works and juvenilia

During his time under Bairstow's tutelage, Finzi's output consisted largely of song settings and choral music. While presumably working on the *Requiem*, Finzi also published several early motets and anthems, all of which he later withdrew. These are noteworthy for their ambitious forces, and choice of seventeenth-century texts.

The Brightness of the Day has the distinction of being one of Finzi's first published compositions, although it was later withdrawn by the composer, who wanted the work 'utterly destroyed'.¹⁰⁹ It was written in 1923 and given its premiere at York Minster at Christmas 1923 by Bairstow, who also promised Finzi that he might endeavour to perform it with a choral society later in the year.¹¹⁰ Described as a 'Christmas hymn', the work is a setting of lines from Henry Vaughan's poem 'The True Christmas', omitting the first ten lines. It is therefore one of his earliest works displaying an affinity with the seventeenth-century poets. He was later to set Vaughan in his anthem *Welcome Sweet and Sacred Feast*, as well as the first piece in his *Two Motets*; 'Psalm 121'. The work was published by Stainer & Bell in 1925, but as it was withdrawn soon after publication, it remains a relatively forgotten part of his oeuvre, not having an opus number. It has been republished recently, again by Stainer & Bell, and has been recorded once.¹¹¹

For such a short work (roughly five minutes in duration), it is relatively ambitiously scored for baritone solo, double chorus, brass, strings and organ (or brass and organ, or strings and organ). The orchestral parts and score are no longer in existence, but the choral score with an organ reduction of the accompaniment remains, and one imagines this is how the work was mostly performed. The piece is initially in E major, although the drone-like pedal note which accompanies the opening baritone solo displays Finzi's early fascination for

¹⁰⁹ Banfield, 80.

¹¹⁰ Dressler, 29.

¹¹¹ McVeagh 'A Finzi Discography' in *Tempo*, New Series, No. 136 (March 1981), 20.

the bare fifth, and its resultant lack of harmonic clarity, this featuring prominently in other early works, such as ‘Exeunt omnes’ from *By Footpath and By Stile*. One can assume that this early fascination was partly the influence of the folk music movement, but perhaps also a wish to subvert the harmonic teachings of Bairstow. It is also suggested by McVeagh that the work was influenced by Holst’s psalm setting ‘To my humble supplication’, which Finzi probably heard at the 1922 Three Choirs Festival.¹¹² The verses of the poem are signified by short triadic bursts from the organ, which, through their concluding chords signify the mood of its respective stanza (E major-A major-B major). However, the overall feel of the solo passage, which features the direction ‘freely’ has an almost modal quality, mainly as a result of the pedal, but also the various melodic inflections.

It is after the third organ chord on B major that the first chorus opens with Vaughan’s text set to the folk song melody, usually known now as the carol ‘The Truth Sent from Above’, also sometimes known as the ‘Herefordshire carol’. It was Finzi’s usage of this melody that instigated his first correspondence with Ralph Vaughan Williams, who had collected the folk song from a Mrs Leather of Herefordshire in the earlier part of the century, and had already used the text in his own *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, published by Stainer & Bell in 1912.¹¹³ Vaughan Williams also published his harmonisation of the carol, based on that used in the *Fantasia* in his *Oxford Book of Carols* of 1924. It is unclear how Finzi first encountered the melody. Listening to the piece today, with the familiarity of the carol and its text, it seems almost bizarre to hear the same melody in Finzi’s Christmas hymn, but given its relative novelty at the time, one supposes the melody would not have been widely known outside of the West Country. Finzi was given permission by Vaughan Williams, who advised him that he ought to contact Mrs Leather to ask for her consent as well. Vaughan Williams

¹¹² McVeagh, 27.

¹¹³ Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1912).

also warned Finzi that he had already used the melody in a work. Diana McVeagh notes that Finzi wrote underneath Vaughan Williams' reply that 'my thing is so slight that I did not think it worthwhile apologising for doing the same', displaying Finzi's lack of confidence in the piece, perhaps even before it was performed.¹¹⁴

Unlike Vaughan Williams' setting of it, Finzi sets it in a surprisingly difficult key, B major, changing to C# minor, which sees the sopranos reaching to a top G, with high part writing for the bass section, which is cast more for a baritone range. Instead of the familiar text, the lines from the poem are imposed on the melody, which unfortunately neglects the word-painting familiar in later Finzi works. The use of a double chorus also seems slightly unnecessary, as they two never actively counteract each other, the second chorus merely entering with a slightly reduced setting in the middle of a verse. One imagines that the work was performed antiphonally, perhaps with a semi-chorus or gallery choir.

¹¹⁴ McVeagh, 27.

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Chorus I, Chorus II, and Organ. The music is in G major (three sharps) and 4/4 time. The key signature and time signature are indicated at the beginning of each part. The Organ part is written for a four-manual organ, with staves for the right and left hands of each manual. The lyrics for Chorus I are "those that want, and ease your load:" and for Chorus II are "Who emp-ties thus, will". The Organ part features a complex contrapuntal texture, with a folk song melody in the pedal. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *mf*, and articulation markings such as *Gt.* and *Sw.*

Fig. 2.18 Finzi, 'The Brightness of This Day', bars 32-34.¹¹⁵

Of more interest here is the organ-writing, particularly the central section in which the melody of the folk song in the pedal acts as a foundation for a contrapuntal harmonisation in the keyboard sections, the execution of which is confident. One can imagine that this would have sounded particularly triumphant in his setting for brass instruments. In his writing for organ, Bairstow's influence is probably clearer, with elements of nineteenth-century harmony and counterpoint teaching, such as slightly over-exaggerated passing notes. One also feels the influence of contemporary organ works founded on psalm tunes, with examples by Stanford, C.B. Rootham and Walter Alcock particularly relevant, whose music Finzi would most likely have encountered in the organ loft at York. This was an area that his first teacher, Ernest Farrar had also explored in his *Prelude on the Old Hundredth*.

¹¹⁵ Gerald Finzi, *The Brightness of this Day* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1925), 6.

The final reappearance of the choruses, this time combined, and mainly in unison, is powerful, with an organ part marked double-fortissimo. The final tierce de picardy in C# major is also particularly impressive. However, as a whole, the work is not particularly rewarding, and given Finzi's dissatisfaction, it is notable that he never used a folk tune, or a tune borrowed from another composer again.

The *Two Motets* were another early composition, published in 1925 by Stainer & Bell, and later withdrawn. They were not revised by the composer, and as of 2009, they remain one of the few Finzi works not to have been recorded. Like many of his early works, they were surprisingly ambitious for shorter settings, being scored for double chorus and orchestra. They also feature motifs that were to become common in his later works. However, the composer was evidently critical of them and withdrew them within a few years of publication, writing in 1941 that he wanted them 'utterly destroyed'.¹¹⁶ According to Stephen Banfield, they were originally intended as part of a larger cycle of six motets which never came to fruition.

Finzi's choice of texts is quite interesting, as he chooses two poets whom he was to set in more famous later works – George Herbert and Thomas Traherne, the latter being probably the first time the poet had ever been set to music, given that Traherne's poetry was only 'discovered' in 1901. The setting of Traherne 'The Recovery', a text found amongst the Dobell poems, predates the first performance of *Dies Natalis* by over a decade, although Finzi had begun several drafts of that piece during the 1920s.

The latter of the motets is dedicated to 'ECB', and one can feel something of Edward Bairstow's influence in the rather heavy part-writing, and the large organ role of the work (it now only exists in Finzi's organ reduction). Indeed, it was Bairstow who encouraged his

¹¹⁶ Banfield, 80.

pupil by giving a performance of the work at York Minster in 1925. For Finzi, it appears quite uncharacteristically judgemental ‘Sin will thou vanquish me’.

The first of the works also displays the composer’s early pre-occupation with unusual time signatures, a significant proportion of the movement being written in 7/8 time. Whether this was a subconscious attempt to be ‘modern’ by the young composer, or whether it was simply a matter of matching the speech rhythms of the text, is unclear, but these time signatures are also found in *By Footpath and Stile* and the *Requiem da Camera*. Most notably, the first work is evidently influenced by Bairstow; notice the parallels between his *Two Motets* and the opening of Bairstow’s most famous anthem *Blessed City, Heavenly Salem*:

The image shows a musical score for Edward Bairstow's 'Blessed City, Heavenly Salem', bars 1-5. The score is for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Organ. The tempo is 'Largamente senza rigore.' The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 7/8. The lyrics are 'Bless-ed Ci - ty, heav'n-ly Sa - lem,'. The organ part includes markings for 'ff', 'pesante', 'cresc.', and 'ff'.

Fig. 2.19 Edward Bairstow, *Blessed City, Heavenly Salem*, bars 1-5.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Edward Bairstow, *Blessed City, Heavenly Salem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914).

★ Molto maestoso ♩ = about 72 3-4

8ve ad lib.

SOPRANO *f* Up to those bright and glad-some hills, Whence flows my weal and mirth, I

CONTRALTO *f* Up to those bright and glad-some hills, Whence flows my weal and mirth, I

TENOR *f* Up to those bright and glad-some hills, Whence flows my weal and mirth, I

BASS *f* Up to those bright and glad-some hills, Whence flows my weal and mirth, I

ff

Fig. 2.20 Gerald Finzi, 'Up those Glad and Brightsome Hills' from *Two Motets*, bars 1-6.¹¹⁸

Note the muscular homophonic triads rising towards the harmonic climax of the introduction at the first appearance of the choir, the emphatic reiteration of the key at the choir's entry. The rising sixths in the treble clef of the organ introduction (bars 1-3) were to become characteristic of the Finzi's later works, for example his anthem 'God is Gone Up'. Like Bairstow's work, Finzi's was also scored for a full orchestra originally, although this is now lost. Due to Finzi's age when being taught by Bairstow, it is likely that it was his teaching of counterpoint and accompaniment style that laid the foundations for Finzi's choral works, over Ernest Farrar whose association with Finzi probably came to its sad conclusion too early for the young composer to assimilate much of his style. However, Bairstow, with the exception of his much-later *Five Songs of the Spirit*, composed few large-scale choral works for soloist

¹¹⁸ Gerald Finzi, *Two Motets* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1925).

and chorus; only the orchestrated *Blessed City* is comparable to Finzi's orchestral anthems. Indeed, one only need look at the 1952 work 'God is Gone Up', discussed later in this thesis, to spot evidence of Bairstow's organ-writing, and although the early works of Finzi were largely rejected by the composer later in his career, the building blocks of his post-war works were already in place.

Chapter III – Post-war works

It was not until after the war that Finzi was given an opportunity to write another large-scale choral work, as his composing was effectively on-hold from 1939-1945 when he worked for the Ministry of War Transport. Following Finzi's discharge from the Ministry in 1945, he was finally able to return to composition, and the subsequent premiere of *Dies Natalis*, mothballed since 1939 marks the start of the decade in which he was to commence or complete his most famous works.

Ernest Bradbury noted in 1961 that the end of the war heralded a minor resurgence in choral composing, and it is in this era that Finzi was to write his major festival works for chorus and orchestra – *For St Cecilia* and *Intimations of Immortality*. *Dies Natalis* brought with it positive reviews, giving the often reticent composer new confidence. Robin Hull noted after that work's premiere in 1945 that Finzi had 'so far shown himself to be especially remarkable.'¹¹⁹ Commissions such as *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice* for Walter Hussey at St Matthew's Church in Northamptonshire in 1946, and *For St Cecilia* for the St Cecilia Society concert at the Albert Hall in 1947 clarified this. However, his best works were yet to come.

i. *Dies Natalis* and the English Neo-Baroque?

In 1966, Frank Howes classified Gerald Finzi amongst a group which he called 'Nationalist Composers'. He sets out his rationale thus:

These composers...would admit the designation, since they have escaped the German bondage of the two previous generations: they have drunk at English springs in the shape of madrigals and folksong; they have been

¹¹⁹ Robin Hull, 'What Now?' in *British Music of Our Time*. ed. A.L. Bacharach (London: Penguin Books 1945). 222.

strengthened by the Bach revival, have been sensitive to English poetry and kept clear of foreign influences (some might say to their loss).¹²⁰

This isolation is arguably true of Finzi in the broadest definition, in that his music is intrinsically, almost explicitly English, a point which his many biographies and even contemporary reviews noted.¹²¹ Anthony Scott recalls from his lessons with Finzi the composer's dislike for Wagner and Richard Strauss, dismissing the latter as using too many superfluous notes.¹²² However, after *The Brightness of This Day* and *By Footpath and Stile*, Finzi's music was unusually devoid of the folk-song influences that coloured the music of his contemporaries. Indeed, to assume Finzi was isolated from the non-Anglo-centric influences of the day is incorrect, and despite not following the Modernist tendencies from the Continent or even that of the nineteenth century German Romantic composers in his music, he appears to have been fully aware of new music.

Indeed, Scott continues to note that Finzi had an acute awareness of contemporary music, for example Berg and Schonberg, and his attendance of contemporary music concerts in London throughout the 1920s are explicitly referenced throughout his correspondence with Howard Ferguson (his first meeting with the latter occurred after a wind-machine fell into the orchestra pit during a performance of Strauss's *Alpine Symphony*, conducted by the composer.¹²³) It is also noted by Banfield that the new works by Swiss-American composer Ernest Bloch, especially his *Concerto Grosso No.1* of 1925 were appreciated by Finzi.¹²⁴

If we are to attempt to see Finzi as a European composer, one Continent-wide trend emerging during the 1920s was that of the neo-classical movement; works designed to infuse modern harmony into classical and baroque forms. The primarily French and Russian

¹²⁰ Frank Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London and Southampton: Camelot Press Limited, 1966). 262.

¹²¹ Banfield, 1.

¹²² Anthony Scott, 'Gerald Finzi as a Tutor of Composition' in *The Clock of the Years*. 42.

¹²³ Howard Ferguson, 'Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)' in *Music & Letters*, Vol. 38, No. 2. (Apr., 1957). 130.

¹²⁴ Banfield, 131.

exponents of this style, namely Prokofiev and Poulenc, Stravinsky and later Shostakovich, had tired of Modernist approaches, and composed new music written as if the Romantic era had not occurred. Arnold Whittall's *Grove* definition of the neo-classical movement defines the movement by the motto 'Back to Bach', suggesting these composers looked to their forebears by composing suites comprising of dance movements, preludes, fugues and strict sonata forms.¹²⁵ British composers of the period, such as Vaughan Williams, E.J. Moeran and Peter Warlock (Philip Heseltine), were just as much part of the Renaissance, Baroque and Classical revival – one only need look at these composers' *Old King Cole*, *Serenade in G*, or the *Capriol Suite* respectively to see their revivalist tendencies. Indeed, all of these composers were as much at the forefront of music as their continental peers via their association with composers such as Ravel (in the case of Vaughan Williams) and Bernard Van Dieren (an influence on Moeran and Warlock). Admittedly, although it would probably be incorrect to label Finzi as a neo-classical composer in the truest Continental sense, many of his works draw parallels with the works of these composers, with Germanic counterpoint transferred into an English idiom. As Howes suggests:

The element from Bach appears most openly in *Farewell to Arms* and *Dies Natalis*, solo cantatas in which the accompaniment is a chorale fantasia of long flowing lines with a lighter, more English note than Bach's.¹²⁶

The influence of Bach may stem from Finzi's training in counterpoint by Edward Bairstow and later from R.O. Morris, both whom authored instructional books on harmony and counterpoint in the Bachian mode. Diana McVeagh also notes that in 1926, Finzi had been

¹²⁵ Arnold Whittall, 'Neo-classicism' at *Grove Music Online*, accessed May 2009.

¹²⁶ Howes, 261.

present at a series of concerts of Bach's cantatas organised by Hubert Foss and Charles Kennedy Scott, and later as the jubilee of the Bach Choir in June 1926.¹²⁷ Howes is correct in stating that Finzi was in a generation of composers who had been aware of the baroque master's works throughout their compositional lives – it must not be discounted that even in 1876, the *St Matthew Passion* had not been heard in England.¹²⁸ Indeed, Vaughan Williams was to play a major part in the revival of this particular work with his annual performances throughout the 1920s.¹²⁹ Finzi himself spent a not inconsiderable sum of money purchasing a collected edition of Bach's works.

His interest in baroque forms was perhaps indirectly influenced by scholarly research into eighteenth-century English composers such as John Stanley and William Boyce. Indeed, in Finzi's own article about Stanley, while admitting that he was not of the same standard as Handel, he argued that Stanley deserved 'a far more important place in the history of our music than he has hitherto been allowed', making particular reference to his chamber concertos and oratorios.¹³⁰ To compound this argument, the *Eclogue for Piano and Strings*, the central movement of Finzi's incomplete *Piano Concerto*, on which the composer worked intermittently throughout this period has been described as 'Mozartian' by McVeagh, while the *Grand Fantasia and Toccata*, itself a spin-off of the unfinished concerto, is undoubtedly a slightly ungainly homage to Bach and baroque keyboard music.¹³¹ The influence of this baroque/classical idiom even extends to the baroque dance-inspired movement titles of *Dies Natalis*; Recitativo Stromentato, Danza, Aria.

Although *Dies Natalis* is not strictly a choral work, to ignore the significance of this piece would be detrimental for any study of Finzi's work – as we have seen with the earlier

¹²⁷ McVeagh, 45-46.

¹²⁸ John Hullah, *The Third or Transition Period of Musical History* (London: Longman's Green and Co, 1876). 160.

¹²⁹ Banfield, 132.

¹³⁰ Gerald Finzi, 'John Stanley (1713-1786)' in *Tempo*, No. 27 (Spring, 1953). 21-27.

¹³¹ McVeagh, 221.

Requiem da Camera, *Dies Natalis* acts as a major quotation bank for Finzi's later compositions, and indeed it is almost singly this composition which marks Finzi's maturity as a composer, with parallels to be drawn both structurally, motivically and in the choice of text. The nature of Finzi's compositions is such that through listening, one can discern familiar sounds and motifs, which are rarely explicit copies of one another but give a feeling of familiarity which makes his music so recognisable. Therefore, while perhaps not the most significant aspect of his compositional oeuvre, the repeated appearances of certain themes, and what these imply based on previous works, create a feeling of continuity throughout his works. Indeed, even instrumental works include sections that almost imply a meaning illustrated by one of Finzi's previous settings of English literature in either his works for solo voice or chorus. Several of these are linked to particular moods and themes in his music, for example the plodding descending bass which he uses to illustrate darker moments (what McVeagh calls his 'march of time') or the 'loveliest of trees' motif'.¹³² These are discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

Although premiered in 1945, *Dies Natalis* was completed in 1939, and had been in development since the early 1920s. The composition emerged over several years, probably incorporating another setting of the *First Century* early in its conception.¹³³

Finzi had been intending to set Thomas Traherne's poetry for years, the first example, as we have seen, being 'Sin will thou vanquish me' in the withdrawn *Two Motets*. Traherne was something of a find for Finzi, being a poet who appealed to the composer on several levels. Although the poet was from the seventeenth century, he had only been fully discovered in 1910 with the publication of his poems and *Centuries of Meditations* by Bertram Dobell. The story of Traherne's manuscripts is extraordinary, with the *Centuries*

¹³² McVeagh, 79.

¹³³ Banfield, 123.

having been discovered in manuscript form on a London bookstall, and several further papers apparently being saved from a lit bonfire. Thus, Traherne was, for Finzi, a potent symbol of his compositional ethos, highlighting the continuity and change in being a twentieth-century composer composing music which essentially aped that of the Baroque era. Finzi was a great revivalist, one only need look at his work to save the works of eighteenth-century composers to see his interest in preservation. Even his rescue of individual old English apple variety plumbs into this ethos of preservation. Indeed, in setting Traherne, he was truly original – no other composer had set his poems at any point (other than perhaps Jane M. Joseph's hymn setting of the Rapture¹³⁴), and Traherne had not yet been widely anthologised (for example the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, which was an important source for much English song in this era, did not include his poems until years later). This allowed Finzi to feel that he had brought the work of an obscure poet to the limelight, which fitted in with his ideas of reviving neglected objects, be they a poet, composer or even rare English apple variety. The poet had begun to attract the attention of musicians early after his initial publication. In 1928 (after Gerald Finzi had already published one setting of Traherne), Edward W. Naylor wrote that his poetry had great potential for composers, specifically praising instances where the poet himself mentioned music, musical instruments or musical metaphors.¹³⁵

Finzi clearly savoured the notion of childhood being another Eden, that, as he had found out, it was only too easy to fall from. Finzi is praised for his understanding, both contextually and textually of his word settings. Trevor Hold writes:

Finzi's great strength as a song-composer is his love and care for the words of the poets he sets. He weighs each phrase, understands each nuance.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Jane M. Joseph (1894-1929) was a pupil of Gustav Holst. Her hymn 'Eskdale' is No.651 in *Songs of Praise*, ed. Dearmer, Shaw & Vaughan Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925).

¹³⁵ Edward W. Naylor, 'Three Seventeenth Century Poet-Parsons and Music' in *Proceedings of the Musical Association* - 54th session (1927-1928). 93-94.

¹³⁶ Trevor Hold, 399.

The four Traherne texts were important choices, as to make his cantata feel cyclic, he set poems which feature distinct themes and imagery. His selection of texts in ‘Rhapsody’ almost appear as setting an agenda of themes to be explored in greater detail in the later movements. The great all-encompassing theme of childhood is crucial to the whole cycle, but particular words or themes appear several times in the libretto, including ‘Angels’, ‘Strangers’, the ‘Gift of God’. In his edition introduction Dobell gives his opinion on the best Traherne poems, and the three included in *Dies Natalis* are amongst them. Of particular note, Dobell writes that the poems he singles out would ‘gain considerably’ as parts ‘of a continuous poem’.¹³⁷ McVeagh speculates that this comment may have been an inspiration for the work.¹³⁸ In his article about Finzi’s songs, N.G. Long suggests that there are dangers in setting texts which require both authenticity and originality in their composition:

...for whilst the infinite variety of language makes it possible to sustain such a mood without monotony, music can only suggest: if it sets out to illustrate in detail, it runs the risk of becoming fiddly; if it is content to maintain the mood, it is in danger of becoming wearisome.¹³⁹

This suggests that while a text relies wholly on language, it is more challenging for a composer to set the text to music convincingly, conclusively and without becoming too fixated on authenticity to the work. This perhaps explains Finzi’s textual alterations, which are considerable, particularly in the ‘Rhapsody’.

Finzi’s selection of text in ‘Rhapsody’ almost appears to be setting an agenda of themes to be explored in greater detail in the later movements. It is a setting of the first three verses of Traherne’s autobiographical *Third Century*, but the sequence used by Finzi is far removed from Traherne’s prose. For example, after opening the libretto with the first line of the first verse (‘Will you see the Infancy of this sublime and celestial Greatness?’) Finzi

¹³⁷ Dobell, lxxi.

¹³⁸ McVeagh, 43.

¹³⁹ Long, 8.

immediately switches to text halfway through the second verse ('I was a [little] stranger...'), focussing on a more all-encompassing impression of the innocence of childhood than Traherne's source poem. It is the second verse of the *Third Century* from which Finzi derives most of his text, with only the opening and final lines of the first verse and the first half of the third verse featuring in the completed libretto. In doing so, Finzi removes some of Traherne's more pious language such as 'Verily they seem the Greatest Gifts His Wisdom could bestow, for without them all other gifts had been Dead and Vain' (from the first verse), instead selecting only the most evocative imagery. Finzi's choice is also likely to have been influenced by the inherent musicality of particular phrases, and therefore he reduces or leaves out most of the over enthusiastic lists which appear in Traherne's *Centuries*, for example 'The Streets were mine, the Temple was mine, the people were mine, their Clothes and Gold and Silver was mine' (verse three), the repetition of which would not have suited the recitative-style vocal construction of the composition. For example, the calming final line of the 'Rhapsody' libretto ('Everything was at rest, free and immortal') appears halfway through the second verse in Traherne's original text, yet forms an evocative, quiet conclusion to the movement. Finzi is similarly selective about 'Wonder' and 'The Salutation', choosing not to set the entire poems, but lines and stanzas which fit the overall programme of the work framing the world through the eyes of a child, and playing down some of the more religious language. Finzi was to make significant editorial revisions to the work of another 17th century poet in his libretto for *Lo, the Full Final Sacrifice*. Indeed, even in *Intimations of Immortality*, Finzi was to leave out whole verses of Wordsworth's source poem.

Due to Traherne's first-person perspective, Finzi chooses to set his texts for a solo voice, and in terms of instrumental forces chooses the relatively modest accompaniment of a string orchestra, which contrasts with his choice of larger ensemble when a plural is used in the poem. Finzi sets the words syllabically, with one note per syllable, a technique he used in

the majority of his vocal works. The melodic themes and structures are dictated by the text, or more specifically the composer's interpretation of the text.

Dies Natalis, like the *Requiem da Camera*, makes use of a Bach-inspired bass accompaniment, especially in the final movement 'The Salutation' ('These little limbs') whereby the bass strings play a slow, plodding walking pulse while the treble strings consist of a series of contrapuntal chords created by interwoven melodic strands. In terms of rhythm, the bass strings dictate the pace, upon which the contrapuntal interest and soloist play out their narrative. Trevor Hold describes the passage thus:

Closely inlined with this is his use of chorale-prelude textures, something which he would have learned from J.S. Bach: a singing, ornamented 'chorale' melody in the pianist's R.H. and a walking bass in the L.H., over which the singer 'floats' a quasi-improvised arioso line. The final song of *Dies Natalis* and the 'Aria' from *Farewell to Arms* are the two most obvious examples. However, Bach's contrapuntal way of thinking influenced Finzi beyond such overt examples, and the basic element of chorale-prelude technique – an elaborate upper-part (=vocal line) over walking bass with contrapuntal inner-parts- is to be found in a large number of his songs.¹⁴⁰

A fine example of this is 'The Salutation' from *Dies Natalis*:

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 396.

The musical score is for 'The Salutation' from *Dies Natalis* by Gerald Finzi. It consists of six staves. The top staff is for S.Voice, with the lyrics 'These little Limbs, — These Eyes and Hands — which'. The second staff is for Violin I (VI.I), marked 'cantabile, ma semplice' and 'pp'. The third staff is for Violin II (VI.II), marked 'div.' and 'cantabile, ma semplice'. The fourth staff is for Viola (Vla.), marked 'pp'. The fifth staff is for Violoncello (Vc.), and the sixth staff is for Contrabass (Cb.). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The S.Voice part has a melodic line with some grace notes. The VI.I part has a melodic line with some grace notes. The VI.II part has a melodic line with some grace notes. The Vla. part has a melodic line with some grace notes. The Vc. and Cb. parts provide a slow, steady bass line.

Fig. 3.1 Gerald Finzi, 'The Salutation' from *Dies Natalis*.

Notice the interplay of violins one and two, as they act in an almost call-and-response method. Hold's assertion can be extended to almost all of his works, but what does the slow walking bass mean in Finzi's works, and what is the primary purpose behind this motif? Firstly, it is a baroque idiom, particularly found in Bach's cantata or aria movements, from the *Air on a G String* from Bach's *Orchestral Suite No.3* (BWV 1068), to the chorale 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring' from his BWV147:



Fig. 3.2 J.S. Bach, 'Jesus bleibet meine Freude' from cantata *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben*. (BWV147).

Note how both in both Finzi and Bach the bass line consists of an uncluttered, clear expression of the time signature, as if it could almost be played on an organ, while a meandering treble and alto voice form a counterpoint above. The emphasis of parallel moving sixths between the treble and alto lines is also an especially Bach-like expression which Finzi incorporated in his works; note, for example the organ writing in bar 36 of 'Lo the Full, Final Sacrifice', where above a firm pedal note, the keyboard parts consist of first inversion sixths. Bach's baroque-influence on Finzi was also to shape the composer's choral writing. Note in this passage from *For St. Cecilia*, we find a walking bass line, with the main harmonic and melodic interest taking place in the upper parts, with the time signature heavily emphasised by a repeated octave bass ostinato:

guide;..... In Eng-land too men marked Ce-cil - ia's

guide;..... In Eng-land too men marked Ce-cil - ia's

(a tempo) p

Fig. 3.3 Finzi, *For St. Cecilia*, figure 16.

The recitative 'Although Mine Eyes' from *St Matthew Passion* is another pertinent example of Bach's influence on Finzi. Here we can see a strong bass pedal, with a contrapuntal accompaniment in the woodwind section, while the soloist performs, or 'floats' as Hold expresses it, on top:

The image shows a musical score for a recitative by J.S. Bach. It is in 4/4 time and marked 'Adagio'. The score is written for a voice and piano. The piano accompaniment is characterized by a constant flow of eighth-note triplets in the right hand, while the left hand plays a steady bass line. The vocal line is a recitative, with lyrics in English: 'Al - though mine eyes with tears o'er flow Be - cause my sa - vior leave me'. The score is divided into three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system starts with a piano dynamic marking 'p' and a 'sostenuto' marking. The second system begins with a '2' above the vocal line, and the third system begins with a '3' above the vocal line.

Fig. 3.4 J.S. Bach, Recitative: 'Although Mine Eyes' from *St Matthew Passion* (BWV 244)¹⁴¹

Although probably not a 'neo-classicist' as such, the influence of Bach and the eighteenth century clearly played a significant part in the composition of this work, and the vocal style and accompaniment form of *Dies Natalis* was to be another seedbed of Finzi's forthcoming choral compositions; as we shall see, the Bach-like bass style underneath contrapuntal melodic lines was influential in Finzi's works to come.

¹⁴¹ John Hullah, *The Third or Transition Period of Musical History* (London: Longman's Green and Co, 1876). 161.

ii. Compositional siblings - *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice* and *For St Cecilia*

It was not until after the war that Finzi was given an opportunity to write another large-scale choral work. In the interim following his withdrawn or unpublished works of the 1920s, he had published two sets of literary part songs; his *Three Short Elegies* based on William Drummond, which he had completed in 1926, and his seven part-songs based on Robert Bridges poems, first published in 1937 but a work in progress since 1931.¹⁴² However, despite being completed in 1939, it was only the first post-war public performances of his cantata for high voice and string orchestra *Dies Natalis* that gained him the attention he needed as a composer, and this led to a number of high-profile commissions.¹⁴³ During the late 1940s, he was required to write two large works in short succession, both to commissions for particular occasions.¹⁴⁴ *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice* was commissioned by Reverend Walter Hussey of St Matthew's Church in Northampton in 1946, and *For St Cecilia* for the St Cecilia Festival Committee concert at the Albert Hall on 22nd November 1947.¹⁴⁵

Considering that Finzi's compositional gestation was usually over years rather than months, both these commissions were completed within an unusually short space of time by the composer, and it is no accident that they bear a marked resemblance. *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice* and *For St Cecilia*, are roughly the same scale and length, and share a similar structure, with certain sections that are almost duplicates of each other. Although *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice* was originally scored for organ, it was later performed with full orchestral accompaniment for the Three Choirs Festival in September 1947, meaning that the two pieces

¹⁴² McVeagh, 39, 77.

¹⁴³ Finzi had intended the work to be performed at the Three Choirs Festival at Hereford (Traherne's place of birth) on 31st August 1939, but this was cancelled due to a government restriction on large gatherings (Banfield, 256)

¹⁴⁴ McVeagh, 147. Finzi had intended the work to be performed at the Three Choirs Festival at Hereford (Traherne's place of birth) on 31st August 1939, but this was cancelled due to a government restriction on large gatherings (Banfield, 256)

¹⁴⁵ Banfield, 327.

must have been undergoing orchestration within weeks of each other. *For St Cecilia* was composed in relative speed by the composer, with initial sketches of the text sent by the librettist Edmund Blunden on 13th June and the performance scheduled for 22nd November.¹⁴⁶ As a result, the work is full of referential points from other Finzi compositions, some of which had not been performed by 1947, but were certainly underway, such as *Intimations of Immortality*.

In this section, I will attempt to show how these two choral pieces, despite a different subject matter, almost act as sacred and secular counterparts, and how they share many stylistic, structural and melodic similarities, as well as discuss Finzi's alteration of his source material.

The texts of *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice* and *For St Cecilia*

Finzi is selective in his choice of text for *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice*. He was given a free hand to compose his anthem, although the theme of the Eucharist was suggested by Hussey, as his previous choral commissions by Britten, Rubbra and Berkeley had not touched on this liturgical area.¹⁴⁷ The use of metaphysical poets was also Hussey's suggestion, although Finzi decided against a setting of Vaughan, whose 'Up Those Glad and Brightsome Hills' he had originally contemplated revising or re-setting. The libretto itself is a composite of two poems by Richard Crashaw (c.1613-1649), specifically from *The Hymn of Sainte Thomas in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*, which is a translation of St Thomas Aquinas's 'Adorno Te' and 'Lauda Sion Salvatoriem'.¹⁴⁸ According to Diana McVeagh, Finzi's original programme noted these poems contained 'involution and obscurities not found in the

¹⁴⁶ McVeagh, 154.

¹⁴⁷ Banfeld, 327.

¹⁴⁸ Gerald Finzi, *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice* (London: Boosey & Hawkes 1946, rev 1947), front material.

original 13th-century Latin', which perhaps allowed the composer greater freedom to alter the text.¹⁴⁹

Finzi's alteration is quite significant, his setting opening halfway through 'Lauda Sion Salvatoriem' in verse XII featuring the text 'Lo the Full Final Sacrifice...', then using half of verse XIII and then the entire final verse (XIV). Finzi then sets 'Adoro Te' lines 37 to 44, beginning from 'O dear memorial of that Death', cutting lines 41-42 'Whose vital gust alone can give/The same leave both to eat & live'. His text moves back to 'Lauda Sion Salvatoriem' verses I and II, before concluding with the final stanza (45-56) of 'Adoro Te', a repetition of the title and the famous Amen, which is present in both texts. Gwilym Beechey wrote in 1977 that although

...the text is selected from other passages seemingly at random...those who known Finzi's music will realize how he selected the parts of the poem that lend themselves most readily to musical setting, and that the coherence and sequence of thought is in no way impaired.¹⁵⁰

Indeed, the text would certainly not have been a random choice, but influenced by a wish to convey something of the 'ecstasy hardly surpassed in English poetry' that he wrote of in his programme note.¹⁵¹ As previously discussed, Finzi was not averse to cutting works of literature to fit his own vision, and had been particularly vigorous in his alterations of Traherne in his earlier *Dies Natalis* libretto, with the second movement text in particular bearing little resemblance to Traherne's original *Centuries of Meditations*. The changes of that libretto are significant enough to lead Diana McVeagh to suggest that although 'The words of *Dies Natalis* are Traherne's...the sequence of thought is Finzi's'.¹⁵² Indeed, in

¹⁴⁹ McVeagh, 148.

¹⁵⁰ Gwilym Beechey, 'The Church Music of Gerald Finzi' in *The Musical Times*, Vol 118, No 1614 (August 1977). 667.

¹⁵¹ McVeagh, 148.

¹⁵² McVeagh, 105.

almost all of his choral works, he made cuts to the source texts, for example removing two stanzas of Wordsworth's poem in his setting of *Intimations of Immortality*.

In this context, Finzi's alteration of his source texts to commence the piece with the phrase, 'Lo the Full Final Sacrifice' is directly linked to Hussey's suggestion that the work should be on the 'theme of the Eucharist', placing at the head of the work Crashaw's stark comparison between the sacrifices of Old Testament against the sacrifice of Christ documented in the New Testament. By opening the work with Christ's sacrifice, the work begins with a reminder of this 'full, final Sacrifice' before discussion of the more ritualistic elements of the Communion service. It also suggests that Finzi wanted the anthem to have a framing device, the implication being that the listener is somehow a 'viewer' of the spectacle described by the poem; the final stanza likewise imagines a vision of the Passion, giving the text a circularity which is mirrored by the musical setting. The idea of a vision framing the beginning and end of a choral work is a device used more explicitly in his later work *In Terra Pax* in which lines from Robert Bridges' 'Noel: Christmas Eve 1913' from *October and Other Poems* were interposed with a section from the *Gospel according to St Luke*, in particular his account of the shepherd's visitation from the Angel Gabriel.

By comparison, *For St Cecilia* is unique amongst Finzi's works in having a bespoke libretto, rather than a 'found' text from his vast collection of English verse. It was commissioned from the contemporary poet Edmund Blunden, whom Finzi knew from his work on Ivor Gurney, and whose poem 'To Joy' he had previously set for tenor voice, and which was later included in the posthumous collection *Oh Fair to See*. Writing on Blunden's contribution, Barry Webb writes that:

By 1947 Finzi was established as one of the most sensitive English songwriters, particularly when setting English pastoral poetry. [Blunden] was somewhat perplexed by the problems of composing words for a

musical setting on the grand scale of oratorio, but his rhetorical ode needed little revision to make it suitable for choral ensemble.¹⁵³

However, McVeagh reveals in her section on the correspondence between the two men that, as with his other choral works, there were still considerable alterations to the poem Blunden initially sent to Finzi. In McVeagh's comparison between the original poem and the final libretto, the final verse of the poem is almost completely different, displaying once again the composer's willingness to alter a text to fit into his own vision of it, although in this case it was the poet, not the composer, who made the alterations, and Blunden approved each draft revision.¹⁵⁴

What marks the works apart primarily is their sacred and secular intentions; to describe *For St Cecilia* as a 'secular' ode may seem surprising, but it is noticeable that for a work about a saint, the libretto features no references to God, indeed going so far as to call Cecilia 'Delightful Goddess', a line which apparently prevented the work from being performed at the Three Choirs Festival.¹⁵⁵ The precedents of Finzi's work mean that it is easy to categorise as a 'ceremonial ode', however, fitting neatly into the same genre as numerous other celebratory odes for St Cecilia, many of which are mentioned in the libretto.

Finzi's version distinguishes itself by the slant it takes on the saint – rather than a simple oration about the saint, the work is more about the 'cult' of St Cecilia than the saint herself. Indeed, the libretto by Blunden subliminally casts doubt upon the veracity of the legend of St Cecilia, beginning 'Delightful Goddess in whose fashioning/And fables Truth still goes adorned' and there is noticeably no mention of her place within Christianity.

The most pertinent influence on the work was probably that of Parry, who had also composed an *Ode on St Cecilia's Day* for similar forces in 1889, his setting being based on the poem by Alexander Pope. Benoliel notes that Parry's work is 'well written from every

¹⁵³ Barry Webb, *Edmund Blunden: A Biography* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990). 273.

¹⁵⁴ McVeagh, 162-163.

¹⁵⁵ Banfield, 353.

standpoint' but 'with odes to St Cecilia by Purcell, Handel, a very fin[e] neglected one by Lizst, and several very distinguished modern settings, there is little hope for this version as repertoire.'¹⁵⁶ Parry would certainly have been on Finzi's mind during this period, with his ongoing efforts to compile a catalogue of Parry's manuscripts, and giving a broadcast on the BBC Third Programme about the composer to mark his centenary in February 1949.¹⁵⁷ In *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*, Stephen Banfield casts doubt over whether Finzi actually knew this work, but describes the many similarities between Parry's choral ode *Blest Pair of Sirens* of 1885 and *For St Cecilia*, particularly the use of 'motivic proposition'.¹⁵⁸ *Blest Pair of Sirens* was a work Finzi was particularly complimentary of, later calling it 'one of the supreme fusions of voice and verse' in his 1949 article on Parry in *Making Music*.¹⁵⁹ Banfield continues to describe a number of similarities between melodic contours, part-writing and structure in the works. A contemporary reviewer for *Music and Letters* summed up this impression of expected derivation in his analysis of the work:

Here are all the ingredients of English festal song. We have a majestically pompous introduction, broad choral declamatory passages over a stately tread, picturesque allusions to St. George, St. Dunstan with his tongs, St. Swithin and St. Cecilia herself, who is hymned with that noble kind of diatonic tune that springs from Parry. The music is effective-in performance...perhaps a trifle dull, but Cecilia is no experimenter; she is, to quote her poet Blunden: 'Sure of her dream that bears the world along Blest in the life of universal song', and introspection, which we have grown to love in Finzi, was clearly not required.¹⁶⁰

In addition there are a number of stylistic comparisons between Parry's coronation anthem 'I was Glad' and *For St Cecilia* in tone and orchestration. 'I was Glad' was composed for the coronation of Edward VII in 1902, and had already ingrained itself as a traditional coronation

¹⁵⁶ Bernard Benoliel, *Parry before Jerusalem* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997). 75.

¹⁵⁷ McVeagh, 164.

¹⁵⁸ Banfield, 347.

¹⁵⁹ McVeagh, 165.

¹⁶⁰ Reviewer, 'Review: *For St. Cecilia*, Ceremonial Ode for Tenor, Chorus and Orchestra by Gerald Finzi' in *Music & Letters*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Apr., 1949). 191.

anthem by the time of George VI's coronation in 1937, the first to be broadcast on radio which Finzi would almost certainly have heard.

The fanfare-like introductions have many similarities; both are *maestoso*, featuring a melodic foreshadowing of the opening vocal entry, both featuring large descending octave bass chords and textures of large inverted triadic chords underlying the melody moving mostly in homophony, with heavy use of percussion to emphasise the first subject theme on each of its appearances.



3.5 Hubert Parry, *I Was Glad* bars 1-4.

Maestoso, ma poco Animato ♩ = c. 104

PIANO

3.6 Finzi, *For St Cecilia* bars 1-9.

In both works, the exposure of the opening motif in the introductions is first heard in a different key, as if to create anticipation, each building to a climax, allowing a small beat before the first line of text; like Parry's work, the first fortissimo choral entry after the introduction features a short break in the accompaniment to allow for the vocal textures to make an impact upon their introduction. One noticeable difference is that Finzi is prepared to alter bar lengths to suit the text, something which Parry largely avoids. As a result of Finzi's focus on the rhythm of the 'Delightful Goddess' opening passage, for example, between bar 14 and 27, he changes the length of bars six times in the space of eight bars; from 4-4, 3-4, 4-4 to 1-4 to 4-4 and 1-4, the single beat bars allowing space for an orchestral interjection.

Continuing the comparison into their respective second thematic sections (Finzi: Changed is the age/Parry: Our feet shall stand in thy gates), we find Finzi using a similar paradigm to Parry of contrasting the largely homophonic choral opening with an imitative polyphonic texture; Finzi had used this trope from his earliest choral works (for example 'August 1914'), and here we see it in use again, developing the choral interest in a more complex arrangement. Note the similarity of Finzi's descending string orchestration at bar 61 to the large descending octaves of Parry's earlier work in bars 26 to 30 of his work.

At this point, Finzi varies from Parry's work by including a soloist, but the similarities of texture and rhythm are again apparent. If we take the soloist of Finzi as a caller, the part is similar to that of Parry's splitting of the choir in two parts, acting in a call-and-response conversation of declaration and repetition. In the accompaniment, in particular note the scherzo-like billowing rhythms of Parry as he sets 'builded as a city' by comparison to Finzi's 'St Swithin with his forty days of showers'.

As Parry's piece is a coronation anthem, for the sake of comparison, we will avoid mention of the 'Vivat' section. With this section cut from Parry's work, we move suddenly

from vivid fortissimo to a quiet and meditative section (O pray for the peace of Jerusalem, bars 82 onwards), in much the same way as Finzi's orchestral bridge section in bars 147- 162 of *For St Cecilia* ends on a fortissimo climax, featuring recapitulation of the first subject motivic material; we leave the choir in full fortissimo with a reprise of the opening 'delightful goddess' motif, with a strong implication of a return to a reprise. However, Finzi surprises us with a sudden change of tone, with an unaccompanied mezzo-piano part-song in the upper voices. This heavy contrast between a huge climax, as the Vivats are for Parry, and a section with a completely new tone is something that Finzi clearly gained from Parry.

Although many of these similarities are admittedly superficial, and could easily to apply to any number of Parry's choral settings, the fact that during this period Finzi was involved in attempting to preserve Parry's manuscripts hints that the composer had gained experience of the nineteenth-century compositional methods that Parry and his fellow teachers at the London music schools taught their pupils; whether there is a direct link between the methods of compositional construction Finzi was taught by his teacher, Ernest Farrar, is unclear, but Farrar certainly commented during his tutorship that his young pupil was eager to devour scores and play through as many musical works as possible. Having viewed the musical collection of Ernest Farrar in the possession of Adrian Officer of Northumberland, we see Farrar's own choice of piano music consists largely of nineteenth century Romantic works, an idiom Farrar himself composed in before his death, and from an early age, Finzi would have been influenced by the Romantic composers as much as his more 'modern' contemporaries; Bairstow, following Farrar as Finzi's compositional teacher, also worked within a conservative idiom of the nineteenth century.

In this sense, in both his compositional method and inspirations, Finzi was composing a modern work in a late nineteenth and early twentieth-century idiom of the generation before

his own, retaining the standard ‘orchestra, large choir and soloist’ template of his predecessor; at this stage, even contemporaries of Finzi such as Vaughan Williams were experimenting with newer choral combinations, such as the individuality of solo lines in the *Serenade to Music* of the 1940s or a work such as Britten’s *Our Hunting Fathers* of the same decade. With regards to ‘modernity’, in his whole compositional oeuvre, Finzi never experiments with unusual instruments, and retains a largely progressive chordal structure, with contrasts achieved in the literal setting of texts; dissonance is largely anathema to the melodic and tonal framework of Finzi’s orchestrations, used very sparingly only to highlight moments of great pain within his settings. Indeed, despite revising poems or other texts for his own devices, like those composers of the nineteenth century, he lets the text dictate the structure more than a classical structure founded on, for example, a sonata form.

The music of *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice* and *For St Cecilia*.

For St Cecilia opens with a triumphant fanfare-like introduction, and the work develops from a motif first heard in the brass, then in the strings. The introduction foreshadows the phrase ‘Delightful goddess’, following a pattern used in the more reserved introduction of *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice*, whereby the eponymous opening motif is echoed in the first choral entry. Finzi appears to use the ‘delightful goddess phrase - rise of a fourth and fall of a sixth - as a sort of motif for Cecilia, and indeed the saints, and it appears a number of times in the score:

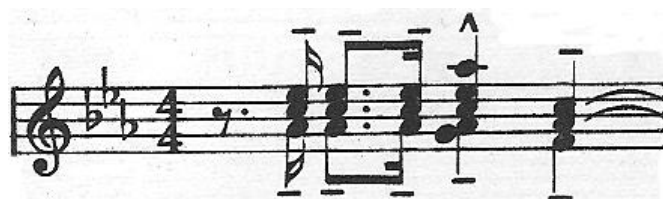


Fig. 3.7 Finzi *For St. Cecilia* opening chords, bar 1.



Fig. 3.8 Finzi *For St. Cecilia* first choral entry, bar 14.



Fig. 3.9 Finzi *For St. Cecilia* St. Valentine's description at Figure 8, bar 81.



Fig. 3.10 Finzi *For St. Cecilia* central section at Figure 11, bar 128.

The opening of *For St Cecilia* itself ebulliently redolent of William Walton's coronation fanfares, or even sections of Walton's score to the 1944 film *Henry V*. It was perhaps Walton's Shakespeare scores that compelled Finzi to write his own score for a BBC Radio production of *Love's Labour's Lost* in 1946, and *For St Cecilia* certainly has hints of that work, particularly the opening material, and the final section at figure 22.¹⁶¹ Stephen Banfield speculates that the brass opening, and later fanfares of *For St Cecilia* may have been inserted due to the presence of trumpeters from the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall at the premiere.¹⁶² Indeed, the *Musical Times* review of the concert, which also included

¹⁶¹ Banfield, 336.

¹⁶² Banfield, 350.

fanfares by Bliss and Bax, noted that there was ‘too much brass in the concert, even for a festival’.¹⁶³

Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice also makes use of motifs. In addition to the opening ‘Lo, the full final sacrifice’ motif that appears in the introduction, the first choral entry and at later points, much as the Cecilian motif appears throughout *For St Cecilia*, there is also this phrase, each time sung by a solo voice – first a treble and then a tenor, opening two separate stanzas of the work:

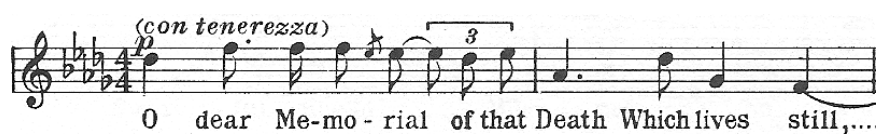


Fig. 3.11 Finzi *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice*, figure 4.



Fig. 3.12 Finzi *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice*, figure 9.

Note also the similarity of the ‘wounded man’ phrase to ‘I nothing in the world did know’ from *Dies Natalis*. The final entry here is also reminiscent of the tone of ‘How smiling did the saint’ later in *For St Cecilia*, being utilised structurally as a melodic phrase before a more robust passage to complete both works.

After the opening bars, *For St Cecilia*’s melodic phrasing instantly sounds idiomatically Finzi – the contrapuntal triplet accompaniments at bar eight are almost speeded up versions of a style heard in ‘The Salutation’ of *Dies Natalis*, and the sweeping Elgar-influenced strings, almost implying a march tempo, project a confident, if slightly derivative air to the work – one must remember that working to a commission, the concert organisers would have expected a work in this vein.

¹⁶³ F. H., ‘The St. Cecilia Festival’ in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 88, No. 1258 (Dec., 1947). 395. At the premiere performance in the Albert Hall, the work was performed by the Luton Choral Society, accompanied by the BBC Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult.

Finzi follows the stanzas of the poem by opening his second section ‘Changed is the age’ with a solo bass line which is then imitated by the opening of the tenor solo in bar 64, a method he was later to use for his setting of ‘Oh evil day, if I were sullen’ in *Intimations of Immortality*, with which this passage also shares a melodic resemblance. *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice* uses a similar template for the opening of its second stanza ‘Oh let that love’, with an imitative opening with the treble section, repeated by the tenor. He also uses the same transitional method between stanzas, with a short instrumental section opening in the new key of eight bars duration, with his characteristic bass pedal notes first seen in his *Requiem da Camera*. The same comparison can be made with the following stanza of *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice*, ‘O dear memorial of death’.

In another comparison, Finzi changes key drastically between verses, mostly during held-notes, for example ‘But legend’s child’ features a Bb minor-B major, a progression he also uses during the angel’s message in *In Terra Pax*, and which is paralleled by his tonal shift from F major to D major in *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice*.

Finzi’s ode clearly revels in the secular slant taken by its libretto; compared to earlier odes to St Cecilia, Blunden’s libretto is knowingly aware of the saint’s fame as a musical, rather than as a religious icon, and at one point she is listed amongst other similarly celebrated saints in something of a ‘catalogue’ of saints noted for their influence in popular culture (St Valentine, St George, St Swithun, etc) in a delightfully vivid word painted section, featuring these are references to the individual saint’s legends or reputations, for example the weather lore rain proverb about St Swithun being illustrated by a rain-like motif (perhaps reminiscent of ‘Childhood Amongst the Ferns’) in the higher woodwinds. Likewise, in St Valentine’s section, he sets a romantic, perhaps almost mock-heroic Romantic, almost operatic fifth in the tenor part, and St George is accompanied by a heroic chord. Following these descriptions, Finzi appears to mimic, either intentionally or by accident Edward Elgar’s

‘Little Bells’ from the second *Wand of Youth Suite*, although there is no denying its similarity:



Fig. 3.13 Finzi *For St. Cecilia*, four bars before figure 10.



Fig. 3.14 Edward Elgar, ‘Little Bells’ from *Wand of Youth Suite No. 2*, fig. 21.¹⁶⁴

In a similar fashion to its section about saints in the popular imagination, Finzi’s work is self-referential in being aware that the Cecilian ode has a great musical tradition. In its first performance on St Cecilia’s day 1948 at the Albert Hall, it was premiered alongside work by other English composers, some whom are mentioned in Blunden’s libretto – Handel and Purcell’s Cecilian odes were also performed.¹⁶⁵ Finzi answers the problem of how to deal with previous Cecilian odes by brazenly mentioning them in a short section in which he implies the development of harmony through the ages in his accompaniment. He opens with an almost chant-like vocal line in bare octaves, perhaps almost musically parodying Merbecke’s cathedral chants, which Finzi would have certainly encountered at York under Bairstow, before developing to simple homophony for Dowland and Purcell, followed by Handel, whose section has a more complex harmony. This section possesses a remarkable similarity to figure six of *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice*, which at points is almost identical – note the same pedal note on B, the progression from unison to homophony. The melodic contours are also highly similar, with a repetition of the opening note sounding almost like

¹⁶⁴ Edward Elgar, ‘Little Bells’ from *Wand of Youth Suite No. 2* (London: Novello 1908).

¹⁶⁵ Banfield, 350

the preces and responses being sung. This of course makes more sense in the context of *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice*, which is a liturgical anthem. Finzi had used a less developed unison chant section before, in his setting of Masfield in the *Requiem da Camera* ('So beautiful it is/I never saw so great a beauty on these English fields'), and he achieves the same spooky effect here, but in a more assured method by use of the held string pedal note. Comparisons between the two works become greater once one analyses the homophonic part-song content, nowhere more so than 'Stand with us Merbecke' and 'Help Lord, My Faith, my hope increase'. Note here how Finzi implies the development of harmony through the ages in his accompaniment, despite its almost chant-like vocal line, and the almost identical melody and string-pedal notes:

13

17 Meno Mosso ($\text{♩} = c. 76$)

ppp espressivo

Stand with us,
Mer - becke, and be Byrd close

ppp espressivo

Stand with us,
Mer - becke, and be Byrd close

ppp espressivo

Stand with us,
Mer - becke, and be Byrd close

ppp espressivo

Stand with us,
Mer - becke, and be Byrd close

ppp

SEMI CHORUS ad lib.

6 Poco meno mosso $\text{♩} = c. 52$

(CHORUS)
SOPRANO

Help Lord, my Faith, my hope in-crease; And fill my portion in thy

ALTO

Help Lord, my Faith, my hope in-crease; And fill my portion in thy

TENOR

Help Lord, my Faith, my hope in-crease; And fill my portion in thy

BASS

Help Lord, my Faith, my hope in-crease; And fill my portion in thy

6 Poco meno mosso $\text{♩} = c. 52$

[illegible]

Fig. 3.15 Comparison of *For St. Cecilia* figure 6 and *Lo, the Full Final Sacrifice* figure 17.

The following graph illustrates the shared sectional development of *For St Cecilia* and *Lo, the Full Final Sacrifice* in terms of structure, harmony and the allocation of voices. Comparable sections have been highlighted by joins between the parallel graphs. Points of note include the harmonic structure of *Lo, the Full Final Sacrifice*, which appears to stay centred around the major equivalent of its initial minor key, E. As a result, D, Db, E, Eb and F are all key centres of the work, suggesting that the harmony moves by semitones. However, when the tenor and bass sections reiterate the text of the opening choral entry ‘Lo, the full, final Sacrifice’ at bar 64, they are in the dominant of the opening, a full fifth (B minor) above the first exposition of this phrase at bar 20 (E minor), which has the effect of subconsciously making the work sound as if it has been ‘raised’. This is an effect that Finzi also used in the harmonic structure of ‘August 1914’ in the *Requiem da Camera*. The Amen, however, returns the conclusion of the work back from the dominant to E, but instead of the E minor of the piece’s opening, it is instead E major, albeit with a small hint of the opening key in the accidentals of the penultimate bar (176). Thus, E major appears to have triumphed over the bleakness of the opening E minor, perhaps subconsciously implying through this resolution the ultimate goodness which emerged from the pain of the ‘Full, final Sacrifice’. The graph below highlights the textual allocation of the poems. For the full text of the Crashaw setting with Finzi’s choices highlighted, please see Philip Lancaster’s introduction to *Lo, the Full Final Sacrifice*.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Philip Lancaster, ‘Lo, the Full Final Sacrifice: an introduction’ in *The Clock of the Years: A Gerald and Joy Finzi Anthology*, ed. Rolf Jordan. (Lichfield: Chosen Press, 2007). 118-119.

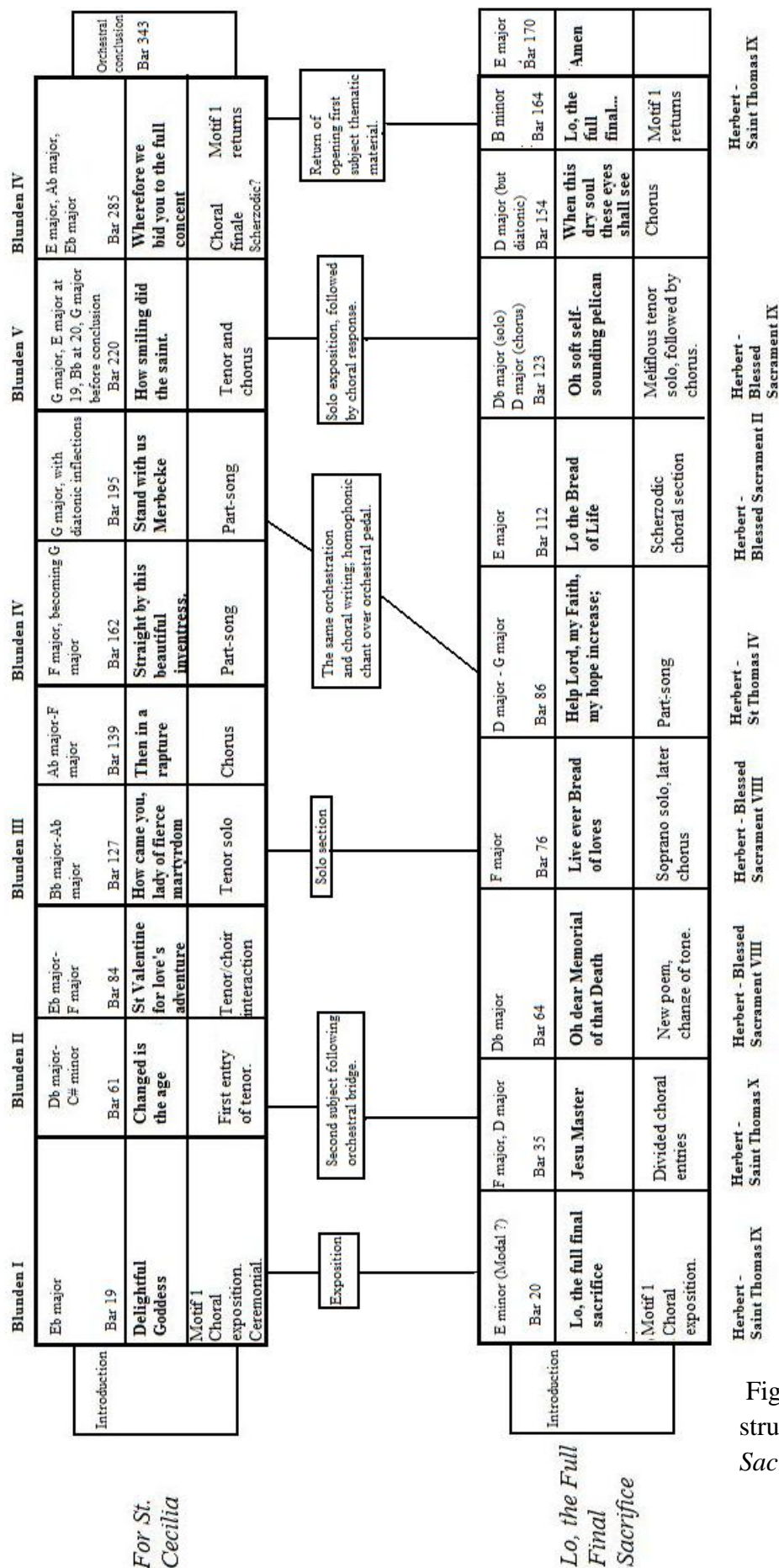


Fig. 3.16 Comparison of structures of *Lo, the Full Final Sacrifice* and *For St. Cecilia*.

As we can see, Finzi's unexpectedly fast requirement to compose these works led to him falling back on familiar construction, especially in his textual assemblage, the structure of the works, a use of relatively free-form vocal setting in solo parts, coupled with more accurate, precise choral writing. Perhaps due to the speed in which these works were completed, there are fewer instances of polyphony, with Finzi evidently saving these for the work which had been in progress for years and was nearly ready for performance; *Intimations of Immortality*, which *For St Cecilia* in particular previews, being the first fully mature post-war choral work by the composer.

Chapter IV – *Intimations of Immortality*

i. Context, gestation and text

In the 1963 *Pelican Companion to Choral Music*, Ernest Bradbury, a Yorkshire music critic, argues that the 1931 premiere of William Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* was the starting point of a minor resurgence of choral music in the post-War period which reached its climax in Britten's *War Requiem* of 1961, which arguably still remains the last great expression of large-scale British choral music to remain in the repertoire.¹⁶⁷ Notwithstanding his early works from the 1920s, it is chiefly within this period of resurgence that Finzi was to write his major festival works for chorus and orchestra, with *Intimations of Immortality* in particular being the apogee of his output. Indeed, in his introduction to John Dressler's bio-bibliography, Howard Ferguson noted that 'many people would choose [*Intimations of Immortality*] as being Gerald's masterpiece.'¹⁶⁸

Although only premiered in 1950 at the Three Choirs Festival, the work, as with most of Finzi's output, had been in gestation for years. Indeed, after experiencing criticism of his *Two Milton Sonnets* in 1936 as being unworthy settings of the poetry, Finzi expressed his anger in a letter to Ferguson:

I do have the bilge and bunkum about composers trying to 'add' to a poem: that a fine poem is complete in itself, and to set it is only to gild the lily, and so on...I rather expected it and expect it still more when 'Intimations' is finished.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Ernest Bradbury, 'Modern British Composers' in *Choral Music: A Symposium*, ed. Arthur Jacobs (London: Penguin Books, 1979). 339.

¹⁶⁸ Dressler, John C., *Gerald Finzi: A Bio-bibliography* (London: Greenwood Press, 1997). 7.

¹⁶⁹ Letter from Finzi to Ferguson, 19th December 1936.

Not only is Finzi here predicting (perceptively) some of the 1950 reviews of his work, but his comment is noteworthy for its implication that the work was well under-way even before *Dies Natalis* was complete.¹⁷⁰ Finzi had intended the work to be completed by 1942 for Vaughan Williams' 70th birthday, but circumstances of the war – the cancellation of the Three Choirs Festival and large public gatherings, plus Finzi's own war work for the Ministry of War Transport - made this impossible, and the smaller Shakespeare cycle *Let Us Garlands Bring* was dedicated to the composer instead. *Intimations of Immortality* was instead dedicated to Adeline Vaughan Williams, the first wife of the composer.¹⁷¹

The nineteenth century saw a trend of setting secular words and music in much larger forms than had ever been previously attempted. From the Renaissance until the late 18th century it was primarily Christian texts which formed the basis of large-scale choral works, with a particular emphasis on epically-scaled oratorios retelling Biblical texts, for example Bach's *St John* and *St Matthew* passions and Mendelssohn's *St Paul* and *Elijah* of 1836 and 1846 respectively.

The poetic lyric, meanwhile, had lost its original concept of being 'sung to a lute' and had become a text-based art form separate from musical influence. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, no musical forms larger than art song featured poetry set to music. It was only in the nineteenth century that the two evolved forms were reconciled. Perhaps the most prominent early work to feature a secular text within a large-scale orchestral work was the concluding movement of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* of 1824. In his series of essays *Music and Poetry*, examining the relationship between the two separated art forms in the 19th century, Lawrence Kramer expands upon the relationship of these texts. He cites the

¹⁷⁰ *Dies Natalis* was intended for a 1939 premiere, delayed until 1945 due to the cancellation of the Three Choirs Festival. This was unfortunate, given that the festival was in Hereford in 1939, the home city of Thomas Traherne, and therefore losing some of the symbolism of the work.

¹⁷¹ Stephen Banfield, 'Vaughan Williams and Gerald Finzi' in *Vaughan Williams in Perspective*. Ed. Lewis Foreman. (London: Albion Press, 1998). 214.

“enormous prestige of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony” as one of the primary reasons for the development of programmatic music during the nineteenth century.¹⁷² He noted that during the century, ‘both vocal and instrumental music have repeatedly engaged themselves, often in dialectic, with the possibilities of poetic expressiveness.’¹⁷³ Kramer goes on to suggest comparisons between Wordsworth’s *Ode: Intimations of Immortality* to Beethoven’s late quartets.

As already mentioned, this developing relationship did not always sit well with critics and musical analysts. In Friedrich Nietzsche’s famous essay “Words and Music”, he suggests that the relationship between words and music is an uneasy one, as setting a poem to music often obscures the meaning of the poet; by interpreting the text literally, he argues, the honed nuances of the poems are lost. Taking as an example the ‘Ode to Joy’ of Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*, very much a template for those nineteenth century composers whom Finzi admired, he states that the simple triumphant folk-like theme of the final movement is not suitable for the tone of the poem, losing its more revolutionary nuances; in this example, he suggests that the music hides the subtleties of Schiller’s text from the listener.¹⁷⁴

In this circumstance, Nietzsche argues that Beethoven had set the Ode to Joy too literally, an argument which was to be levelled against many of the programmatic text-inspired works of the nineteenth century; with particular focus on the conflict between music imitating the literality of the source text, or the meanings and interpretations hidden within.

In this respect, Finzi once again finds himself at the tail-end of this nineteenth century trend; Finzi forsakes the more modernist ideals of Nietzsche, who philosophised that ‘the sanctuary of music which the emotions...cannot show but only symbolise’. Instead, Finzi sets

¹⁷² Kramer, Lawrence, *Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, 3.

¹⁷³ Kramer, 3.

¹⁷⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘On Words and Music’ (trans. Walter Kaufmann), in Dahlhaus, Karl, *Between Romanticism and Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 112.

his work with painstaking care to achieve the opposite. In some cases, such as the Eastern modal inflection on ‘lovely is the Rose’ (bar 120), we find one of the few examples of melisma in Finzi’s writing for voice. Finzi usually sets texts with one syllable-per-note, so the rare examples of melisma here (and also in the Amen of *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice*) come as a surprise to the listener familiar with Finzi’s normal technique in setting words to music.



Fig. 4.1 Finzi, *Intimations of Immortality*, bars 119-121.

Other particularly fine examples of Finzi’s interpretation of Wordsworth include the ‘shadowy recollections’ of the tenor which are echoed by a subdued string descent, as if falling, or the ‘eternal silence’, in which Finzi introduces a heart-stopping pause before the rolling anguish of ‘to perish never’ (bars 529-545). However, we also find a number of examples in the *Intimations* Ode where his all-too-literal setting misses the sense intended by Wordsworth in the source text, for example his setting of ‘oh joy that in our embers’ at bar 490 gives the melancholy phrase a more triumphant emphasis that Wordsworth is unlikely to have intended; with the poet’s irony missed by the need of the music to reach a natural climax.

Finzi’s work can categorically be defined as an ode, both in the musical and poetic realms. In its musical sense, the term is often used for a ceremonial work, for example Purcell’s *Ode for St Cecilia’s Day* and Finzi’s own *For St Cecilia*. However, the usage of the term here is as a work with particular significance to the composer, with Elgar’s *The Music*

Makers of 1911-1912 the most pertinent example.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, the work features many similarities – the work is a setting of a poem that expressed a sentiment felt keenly by the composer, ‘We are the music makers, we are the dreamers of dreams’, which sums up something of Elgar’s compositional ethos and preoccupations with dreams throughout his work. Likewise, it is quite easy to place Finzi’s own Ode, *Intimations of Immortality*, as an example of a ‘personal ode’, after all the title of the poem itself contains the word, and the evocation of lost childhood, or of an irretrievable moment in the past are key recurring themes throughout Finzi’s opus. Indeed, as previously stated, he began setting the poem as early as 1934, while he was still working on *Dies Natalis*, a setting of Thomas Traherne which shares a similar, albeit less pessimistic, outlook. Wordsworth’s own childhood memories were particularly vivid, and he claimed to have memories as far back as his infancy, something which he relates in *The Prelude* as a ‘five year’s Child’.¹⁷⁶ However, for Finzi the negative aspect of the poetic imagination beginning with childhood created a sense of loss; Wordsworth opens *Ode: Intimations of Immortality* with the nostalgic phrase ‘There was a time’, and like the poet, Finzi appears to have believed in a utopian vision of childhood that he was probably excluded from. As Stephen Banfield mentions, lines such as ‘shades of the prison-house’ must have held a resonance with Finzi.¹⁷⁷

Diana McVeagh has written that Finzi may have been directed towards the poem by Bertram Dobell’s introduction to Traherne’s poem. Certainly, in the introduction to the 1906 volume by Bertram Dobell, used by Finzi for his setting, the editor observes some remarkable comparisons to the Romantic poets, William Blake and William Wordsworth.¹⁷⁸ In particular,

¹⁷⁵ ‘Ode’ in *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev. Ed. Michael Kennedy. Oxford Music Online. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e7413>>.

¹⁷⁶ William Wordsworth, ‘Ode: 1815’ in *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, edited by Stephen Gill. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Line 291.

¹⁷⁷ Banfield, 387.

¹⁷⁸ Herbert Dobell, Introduction to *The Poetical Works of Thomas Traherne* (London: Published by the editor, 1906), p. lxxviii- lxxix. Hereafter cited as Dobell.

one common theme of Traherne criticism, especially of his works themed around childhood is the poet's uncanny similarity to Wordsworth's 1815 *Ode: Intimations of Immortality upon Recollections of Early Childhood* in which he suggests 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy.' (l.65) Dobell states explicitly that the two poets have 'some remarkable affinities', specifically 'the Wordsworth of the magnificent ode' rather than the 'thin and unproductive' author of his later works.¹⁷⁹ It is no coincidence, then, that in *Dies Natalis*, Finzi had chosen selected lines which imply a Wordsworth-inspired reading of the text. As previously discussed, one suspects that the critics disapproving of Finzi's choice in setting the poem to music were unaware of the wealth of obscure poets – Traherne, Ralph Knevet, William Austin, Edward Taylor – whom Finzi had figuratively helped to achieve their own 'immortality' through music, especially in the case of Traherne. Indeed, despite the disparity in the source and relative fame of the texts, the connections between *Intimations* and *Dies Natalis* are very clear – both poetically and musically. As Stephen Banfield pointed out in his comparison of Finzi's setting with Arthur Somervell's 1907 setting, criticising Finzi's choice of text underestimates the strength of feeling on the part of the composer:

the attitude is myopic, for it ignores the case of the composer who is drawn towards a poem on account of its humanistic content.

Other composers have been drawn to the poem, and Finzi was not the first composer to set lines, although his is the most complete, removing only two stanzas. Somervell's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* was first performed at the Leeds Festival in 1907, from whence it sunk into obscurity. Other settings include a song by Henry Walford Davies, which set part of the fifth stanza, and the same stanza later formed the opening choral section of George Dyson's *Quo Vadis*.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Dobell, p. lxxix

¹⁸⁰ Stephen Banfield, 'The Immortality Odes of Finzi and Somervell' in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 116, No. 1588. (Jun., 1975), 527-528.

Finzi sets most of the lines written in the first person for the solo tenor, a part which takes on an almost heroic role in sections (in the sense of a protagonist, rather than in the Classical sense). For plural sections of the text, or parts which require a suitably intense declamation, he utilises the chorus, sometimes combining it with the soloist in the manner of Parry. Finzi's choice of a tenor voice lends the work a fresh, melodious sound, unusual perhaps given the darker subject matter; for his world-weary Hardy songs, the inherent gravitas of the baritone voice had been his choice. However, considering the work was conceived in the 1930s, it matches his other solo tenor works of the period; the *Farewell to Arms*, the *Milton Sonnets* and *A Young Man's Exhortation*. Indeed, the opening of the *Milton Sonnets* ('When I consider how my life is spent') features a contoured opening corresponding to the first person narrative of *Intimations*.

ii. Commentary and analysis of structures

Intimations of Immortality opens, in the manner of the 'Prelude' from *Requiem da Camera* and the 'Intrada' from *Dies Natalis*, with an overture-like exposition of the themes that we are about to hear in the following movements, the opening itself is grouped in an A-B-A2 structure. The piece opens in the key of G minor, with a rising motif (Motif 1) played by a solo horn foreshadowing the fifth verse line 'Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting', which gives a characteristically melancholic, almost primeval feel to the opening, the solo horn carrying connotations of hunting and the pastoral.

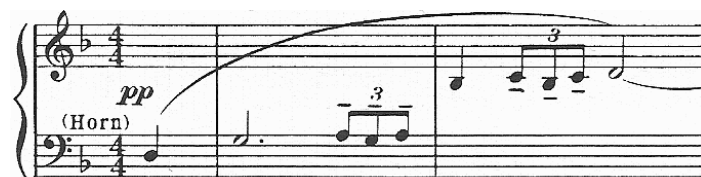


Fig. 4.2 Motif 1: 'Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting' (verse V, bars 1-3)

The G minor is the dominant of the opening section, followed by the first exposition of the 'There was a time' theme (Motif 2) by the full string orchestra, countered by imitative woodwinds, with particular emphasis on the bassoon. This section is in D minor, the predominant key of the work.

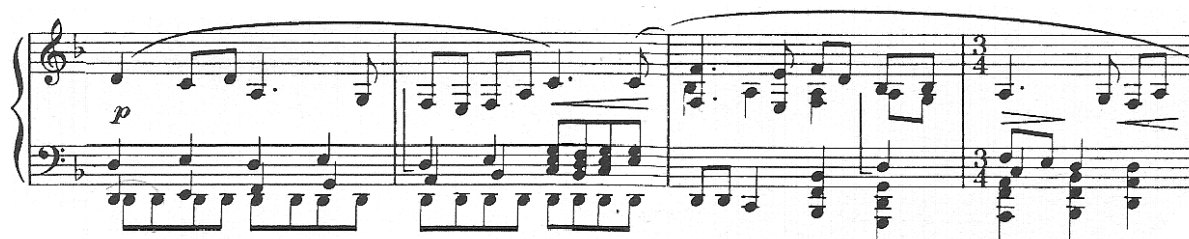


Fig. 4.3 Motif 2: 'There was a time when meadow, grove and stream' (verse I, bars 9-12)

Following this, a segment foreshadowing the passage 'Oh evil day, when I were sullen' from the fourth stanza is underpinned by bass strings and percussion beating out the slow 'funeral march' motif so common in Finzi:



Fig. 4.4 Motif 3: 'Oh evil day, when I were sullen' (verse IV, bars 22-26)

This bass eventually grows in anticipation, as the strings rise in strong triadic chords towards a full, fortissimo joining passage, which prepares the first key change to C minor, characteristically falling a tone. The section at Figure 1 in the score mirrors 'but to me there came a thought of grief', again underpinned by the plodding Bachian bass, and perhaps

hinting at the ‘Loveliest of trees’ motif. This is succeeded by the prominent motif in the introduction ‘the things which I have seen’:



Fig. 4.5 Motif 4: ‘The things which I have seen’ (verse I, bars 26-28)

At Figure 2 in the score, the piece returns to the ‘There was a time’ motif, albeit transitioning to an ambiguously diatonic segment which may be E major or C# minor, deciphering which is hindered by the use of sixth chords for most of the section, implying second inversions. This is soon followed by another quotation from the main score, a brief passage relating ‘I feel it all’ from the fourth stanza:



Fig. 4.6 Motif 5: ‘I feel it all’ (verse IV, bars 32-33)

‘Whither is fled the visionary gleam’ is the final motif to be referenced in the introduction, played on lugubrious low bass strings. Note that here Finzi is using first and second inversions in the bass accompaniment, something which he uses to create a feeling of uncertainty.



Fig. 4.7 Motif 6: 'Whither is fled the visionary gleam?' (verse IV, bars 50-53)

This leads into a repetition of motif 2, and the section finally concludes with a melancholic, Vaughan Williams-esque violin solo marked 'ad lib', the bars before preparing the vocal part to enter in D minor. The key progressions of this passage are almost cradle-like in their contour.

Whereas the introduction is a procession of motifs from the vocal sections, to fully analyse the key structures and motifs, the work needs to be divided into events. The following table breaks down the work by Wordsworth's stanza designations (commas indicate transitional material), Finzi's bar numbers and figure allocation (if available), the diatonic key-centres, quotations of Wordsworth's text and any comments relating to noteworthy moments in the music.

Stanza	Bar/figure	Key	Thematic material	Comments
0	1	G minor	‘Our birth is but a sleep’ motif from stanza V.	Introductory solo horn motif.
0	9	D minor	First appearance of ‘There was a time’ theme.	Strings backed by ‘funeral’ bass pedal.
0	23 f1	C minor	‘First appearance of ‘To me alone’ theme	Backed by ‘funeral’ bass pedal.
0	27	C minor	‘All the things that I have looked upon’.	
0	44	C minor	Transition	Hint of ‘loveliest of trees’.
0	58	C# minor	‘There was a time’	More melancholic rendition on clarinet. Moves onto violin cadenza.
1	72	D minor	There was a time	First appearance of tenor soloist, followed by imitative chorus in roughly 3-bar phrases.
1	98	D minor	It is not now	Another important motif.
‘2’	115	E minor	Transition	
2	118	E minor	The rainbow comes and goes.	Part song. Note unusual tenor melisma on ‘lovely is the rose’ – almost unique in Finzi.
2	130	E minor	Waters on a starry night	Part song. Becomes complex 8-9 part choral section by 140. Climaxes at 145 on A major.
2	147	A major	Transition ‘there was a time’	Transitional material.
‘3’	153 f10	E minor	Opens with dissonant chord, possibly an added-note E minor inversion?	I-V-I note motif used for key transition.
‘3’	171	C major	Switches between serious feeling and playful pastoral flute section, referring to ‘happy shepherd boy’.	Xylophone solo heralds next verse. Dominant G octaves at 182 prepare for next section.
3	185 f11	C major	Now while the birds thus sing	Large choral exposition of theme. Possibly the ‘second subject’. <i>Belshazzar’s Feast</i> similarity.
3	190-1	E major	And while the young lambs bound.	Despite key implying A major, E is the more dominant root in this section,

				perhaps intentionally in preparation for the following section.
3	209	G# minor	To me alone, there came a thought of grief.	Imitative choral writing, beginning with bass section.
3	223	A major	...strong: The cataracts blow	Imitation between SA and TB. The setting of 'echoes' is particularly interesting – delayed imitation.
3	243-4	D major	The winds come to me	Scherzo? More dissonant foreboding feeling towards end of section (roughly 260 onwards)
3	274	F# or # major	Shout round me	Climax – resolves from dissonant BEA# chord to E major inversion.
'3-4'	280	B major?	Scherzo-like orchestra interlude.	Ends on enormous triadic B minor chord – BD#FACEG
4	305 f16	E minor	Ye blessed creatures	Huge choral and orchestral section, slightly playful central section before returning to stodgier ending, suggesting the primeval.
4	330 f17	E minor-G major	Oh evil day	Slightly inappropriate word setting – first person used in imitative choral section. Becomes G major by 342.
4	351	G major	And the children are culling	Solo tenor section.
'4'	368	B major	Orchestral interlude	Repetition of 'There was a time' motif.
4	390 f.20	B minor	But there's a tree	Melancholic solo tenor.
4	396	F minor	Both of them speak	Unexpected key change.
4	405	F minor	Whither is fled	Part song
5	414 f.22	B minor	Our birth is but a sleep.	Beginning of the dirge-like funeral march. New stanza, but not an unrelated key. Repetition of introductory motif (although that is based on this phrase).
5	431	Eb major	Heaven lies about us	SA in major, TB in minor. Eventual transition.
5	436	E major?	Upon the growing boy	Transitional phase.
5	440	F major	The youth, who daily	Unison at first.
5	450	A major-F# minor?	At length the Man	Bass and tenor unison.
6	465	A major	Earth fills her lap	Note triadic third scales.

	f.24			
6	470	G major	Mother's mind	G major, despite key signature. Tenor solo, very Finzian octave leap. Hint of Farrar? ('and from the west' from <i>Margaritae Sorori</i>)
'6'	481	Indeterminate	Short orchestral interlude. Finzi skips two Wordsworth verses here.	'Birth is but a sleep' motif interlude becoming 'glory from the earth' into 'there was a time'
9	489-90	C major/A minor	Oh joy that in our embers.	Separated SA and TB.
9	498 f.26	A minor	The thought of our past	Tenor solo – highly diatonic section.
9	505	Db /Ab/Eb major	Delight and liberty	Key has been implied for the last two bars. 507 has Eb major as key, yet accidents throughout featuring a Db.
9	510	Eb major	Not for these I raise	Now clarified, particularly by tenor solo at 513 which resolves around Eb. 'Obstinate questions' setting is mirrored in the next section. Last post in 527?
9	529 f.28	E minor – G major	But for those first affections	E minor implied through pedal note. Echo of 'there was a time' motif in the strings, fading at 531. Diatonic later – possibly A major?
9	542 f.29	A/G minor?	...truths that wake	Sudden key movement, heavily diatonic. Rising bass.
9	560	C major	Hence in a season of calm	Homophonic part song.
9	568	C major	Which brought us hither	Turbulent word-painted accompaniment, hinting at the 'sea' of the text. Part song changes into more polyphonic, interrupted style. Splits into eight parts at 577.
'10'	581 f.32	Bb major -	Orchestral interlude	Reprise of material c.171. Less build up than before. Less preparation - almost appears out of nowhere.
10	597 f.33	C major	Then sing ye birds, sing	Recapitulation of material at bar 185, reprising <i>Belshazzar's Feast</i> similarity. Homophonic choral setting.

10	602-3	A major	And let the young lambs	Despite ostensive key of A major, the dominant E is the most apparent note of this section.
10	621 f.34	F major	We in thought will join	Moves between F major and dominant Bb major.
10	633 f.35	Bb major/D minor	What though the radiance	Hints of D minor at points, due to sharpened 7 th .
10	646	Bb major	...glory in the flower	Clearly Bb major despite indications of key signature.
10	653 f.36	F minor, Ab major	We will grieve not	Part song – F pedal, although no sharpened 7 th .
10	671	Bb minor	...mind.	Mini interlude featuring ‘there was a time’ motif.
11	676-7	Db major	And O ye fountains	Moves between Db major and F minor (?).
11	690 f.39	Eb major	I love the brooks	Reminiscent of ‘Mother’s mind’ section. Bass throughout section features on-beat variation of ‘funeral’ motif.
11	707 f.40	F major	Thanks to the human heart	Part song, unaccompanied by orchestra. Joined by tenor soloist.
11	713	D minor	Thoughts that do often	Switches back to original key just before the end. Tenor has the last word.
‘11’	717	D minor	Orchestral conclusion.	Opening repetition based on ‘our birth is but a sleep’ motif.

In *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*, Stephen Banfield breaks down the structure of *Intimations of Immortality* thus:

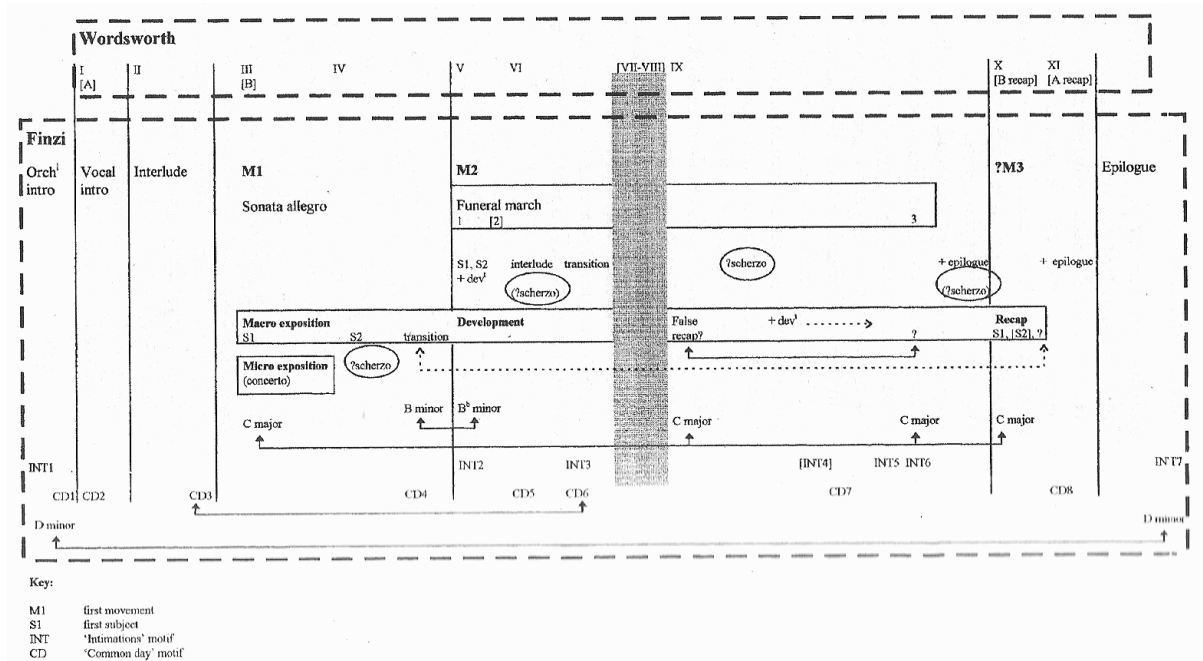


Fig 4.8 Stephen Banfield's diagram of the formal structure of *Intimations of Immortality*.¹⁸¹

Points worthy of note in his diagram is the prominence given to the 'funeral march', his label for the plodding bass beginning in bar 414 'Our birth is but a sleep'. Also note the frequent references to scherzo sections, and hints that the work is in a sonata form. However, as with most of Finzi's choral works, the distribution of the piece is really based on the text. In this case, the Pindaric ode form of Wordsworth's poem is probably more relevant than traditional Western sonata forms. Banfield also makes a note of particularly prevalent motifs, the most common being the 'Common day' motif, Banfield's name for melody which opens the tenor solo 'There was a time'. The distribution of this motif is particularly interesting when seen in relation to the text. Sections of the text featuring the motif are:

¹⁸¹ Banfield, 377.

(Introduction)

‘There was a time when meadow grove and stream’ (Stanza I)

‘But there’s a tree of many a one’ (Stanza IV)

‘Forget the glories he hath known’ (Stanza VI)

‘But for those first affections/those shadowy recollections’ (Stanza IX)

‘And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills and Groves’ (Stanza XI)

Looking at the ‘subject’ of these phrases, Finzi appears to relate the motif to sections in the text featuring memory or loss. Other than the first exposition, the theme only appears in the orchestral accompaniment, often quite hidden or incomplete, for example ‘But for those first affections’ where the accompaniment forms a counterpoint to the tenor solo:

Fig 4.9 ‘There was a time’ motif in *Intimations of Immortality* bars 529-530.

The motif also appears in a major key transformation before ‘Oh joy that in our embers’

Fig 4.10 ‘There was a time’ major key motif in *Intimations of Immortality* bars 488-489.

This fits with the tone of the whole work, which is a procession of dark and light moods. While the tone of the work is subdued, it is not entirely pessimistic, and amongst melancholic passages, such as ‘Oh evil day! If I were sullen’ are also moments of great joy ‘and the children are culling on every side/in a thousand valleys far and wide’, although Finzi tempers these by highlighting that they are often in relation to the narrator seeing children who

haven't experienced adulthood yet. As in Parry's *The Lotus Eaters*, male-only choruses are utilised when dark tones are required, with female voices the opposite. Following 'with joy I hear!' in bar 366-367, the 'There was a time' motif is orchestrated in a triumphant major key variation, forming a climax of the work, tempered by the whispered despair of 'Whither is fled the visionary gleam', a passage reminiscent of the unison 'Lord help our faith increase' and 'stand by us Merbecke' sections in *Lo, The Full Final Sacrifice* and *For St. Cecilia*.

The structuring of the work via the text, but more specifically on the word-painted sections has drawn criticism, something that John Russell counters in his 1954 overview of Finzi:

There is perhaps a more intimate marriage of these to the pitch and rhythm of the music than in the work of any other British composer. So close is the bond that it is the easiest thing in the world for a hostile critic to level against it the accusation of painstaking and laborious literalness.¹⁸²

Finzi can justifiably be described as using a 'laborious literalness' in his word setting, but not necessarily in a critical way. He does deliberately 'set' every single line, and examples of word-painting can be found in every stanza, either in the contour of a melodic line, an incidental detail or colour within the orchestration. For example, in Fig. 4.10, we see Finzi illustrating the text in the part-song section of stanza IX 'trembling like a guilty thing surprised' by an emphasis on 'trem', followed by a small diminuendo and pause on 'ble'. This is followed by illustrating 'guil-ty' by introducing insecure-feeling staccatos on a downward trajectory, emphasised by a false relation between the soprano and tenor parts (F-F#). The pause after 'Thing' creates tension by its silence, relieved a second later with an accented 'sur-*prised*', the soprano and tenor creating this 'surprise' by using a larger interval than in the previous section:

¹⁸² Russell, 11.

Fig. 4.11 *Intimations of Immortality*, bars 525-528.

Fig. 4.11 *Intimations of Immortality*, bars 525-528.

Numerous examples can be found of this ‘word-painting’, although, as mentioned in both Banfield and McVeagh’s studies, there are a number of passages in which Finzi sets the text too literally, the highlighted example being ‘Not for thee I raise/the song of thanks and praise’; Finzi has a large upward moving crescendo towards ‘raise’, followed by a sudden descent.

Fig. 4.12 *Intimations of Immortality*, bars 510-512.

Fig. 4.12 *Intimations of Immortality*, bars 510-512.

However, the line’s qualifier ‘Not’ perhaps suggests that the passage has been almost mistranslated into music, the line having a more pessimistic outlook. However, it could be

argued that the sudden deflation during the ‘song of thanks and praise’ was intended to illustrate this.

Of all of his choral works, it is this work which probably makes greatest use of a solo voice. Like *In Terra Pax*, the solo voice opens and closes the work. His vocal lines are typical of the composer, featuring abundant use of triads, scales and fifth or octave leaps, for example ‘It is not now as it hath been of yore’ (D3,C3,D4,A4,A4,A4,G3,C4,B4,A4 – bars 98-99) or ‘Oh evil day if I were sullen’, his solo sections often accompanied by a second inversion chord or octave bass, perhaps inspired by the Bachian bass as used in *Dies Natalis*. Finzi, as in all of his works, sets the text with a syllable per note. Finzi himself quoted W.B. Yeats in his *Crees Lectures*:

For at one time Yeats had written "a musician who would give me pleasure should not repeat a line or put more than one note to a syllable".¹⁸³

Indeed, Finzi is said to have followed Archbishop Thomas Cranmer’s doctrine of ‘one syllable per note’ and, as previously noted, rarely uses melisma.¹⁸⁴ Trevor Hold notes that Finzi’s vocal lines follow distinct finger prints, writing:

The expressiveness of his vocal lines is usually achieved by contour rather than chromaticism, in a mixture of conjunct movement and large expressive leaps.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Gerald Finzi, ‘The Composer’s Use of Words’, transcript of his three *Crees Lectures*, delivered 1954 at the Royal College of Music, ed. Diana McVeagh 2007. Available at <<http://www.geraldfinzi.org/?page=/about/crees.html>>

¹⁸⁴ Hold, 397-8

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

iii. Comparisons with other works

As Ernest Bradbury notes, in the period of writing *Intimations*, it was likely to have been Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* that breathed new life into the large-scale choral work, a genre which had arguably been in decline since the Edwardian period. Although Finzi's appreciation of *Belshazzar's Feast* is undocumented, on hearing an all-Walton Prom in 1936, he wrote to Howard Ferguson

I thought Walton stood the test of a one-man show very well...One may like or dislike the cold, glittering detachment about it all, but one can't help feeling that technically – for sheer mastery and management – there has never been anything quite to equal it.¹⁸⁶

However, for all its modernity, by writing *Belshazzar's Feast*, Walton was almost turning back to an older, more traditional concept of oratorio than seen in Elgar's work, utilising an adapted Biblical text by Osbert Sitwell. However, despite Elgar's work being the more progressive in terms of textual and conceptual content, Walton's oratorio brought the genre up to date Bradbury writes:

when this dramatic cantata was first produced at the Leeds Festival in 1931 it was generally agreed that nothing like it had been heard before in English choral music. Besides its seeming difficulties the fancied enormities of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*...appeared almost old-fashioned and almost insignificant.'¹⁸⁷

It was in the writing for orchestra and chorus that Walton was revolutionary, and several parts of Finzi's work can be seen to mirror sections of Walton's work. The most noticeable section of inspiration from *Intimations* is Finzi's setting of 'Sing ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song', which mirrors the percussive, rhythmic orchestration and slow crescendo climax of 'Then

¹⁸⁶ Finzi - Ferguson 14th August 1936, 127.

¹⁸⁷ Ernest Bradbury, 'Modern British Composers' in *Choral Music: A Symposium*, ed. Arthur Jacobs (London: Penguin Books, 1979). 339.

sing, sing aloud to God our strength' from *Belshazzar's Feast*. If we compare these back to back, the paradigms are obvious:

The image displays a musical score for William Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*. It consists of two systems of music. The first system features four staves: three vocal staves (soprano, alto, and tenor) and one piano accompaniment staff. The vocal parts enter with the lyrics "Then sing, sing a - Drum singt, sin - get" in English and "Then sing, Drum singt," in German. The piano part provides a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal and piano parts, with the lyrics "sing a - loud to God our strength: Make a joy - ful" in English and "sing a - loud to God our strength: Make a joy - ful" in German. The piano part continues with a similar rhythmic pattern. The score is written in 3/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Fig. 4.13 William Walton, *Belshazzar's Feast*.¹⁸⁸

188 William Walton, *Belshazzar's Feast* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931 rev.1951). 83.

32 Allegro gioioso (♩ = c. 132)

pp *cresc. poco a poco* *mp* *schierzando* *sempre cresc.*

mf marcato *f pesante*

più cresc. *ff* *accelerando* (Beat 3 ♩. ♩. ♩.)

33 a tempo

SOPRANO
CONTRALTO
TENOR
BASS

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing..... a joy-ous song!...

33 a tempo

fff

Fig. 4.14 Gerald Finzi, *Intimations of Immortality* bars 596-599.

Both these passages appear twice with their respective scores – Finzi is able to utilise Wordsworth’s return to the image of singing birds in the verse opening ‘Now while the birds thus sing a joyous song’ motif for the later repetition of ‘Sing ye bird sing’ phrase to repeat his motif, following the example of Walton, who utilises the ‘Sing aloud to God our strength’ passage twice towards the end of *Belshazzar’s Feast*. The orchestral build-ups both utilise pulsing, percussive rhythms, which although commonplace in Walton’s music, are most unusual in Finzi. Other jazz-influenced works of the 1920s and 30s can also be listed as inspirations, such as Constant Lambert’s choral masterpiece *The Rio Grande* of 1929 with a text by another member of the Sitwell family.

The setting also owes something to Edward Bairstow, even though Finzi may not have acknowledged this. At a basic level, Bairstow rarely, if ever, used melisma in his textual settings, something continued by his pupil, with melismatic phrases such as ‘lovely is the rose’ being noted exceptions as is often pointed out about his songs, Finzi rarely uses melisma.¹⁸⁹ One of the most explicit similarities is in Bairstow’s anthem ‘Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence’ of 1925, the held pedal with a solo voice superimposed being used by Finzi on two highly poignant sections in his two major 1950s choral works:

¹⁸⁹ Trevor Hold, 397.

TENOR SOLO
p
Let all mor-tal flesh keep si - lence,
BASS SOLO
p
Let all mor-tal flesh keep si - lence,

pp *dim.*
- ia, _____ and
pp *dim.*
- ia, _____ and
pp *dim.*
- ia, _____ and
pp *dim.*
- ia, _____ and

Fig. 4.15 Edward Bairstow, 'Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence'.¹⁹⁰

ppp *lontano e senza rigore*
S. seem mo - ments in the be - ing.... Of the e - ter - nal Si - lence:

Fig. 4.16 Finzi, *Intimations of Immortality*, fig 28.

Heark'-ning in the as - pect of th'e - ter - nal si - lence.

Fig. 4.17 Finzi, *In Terra Pax*, fig 15.

¹⁹⁰ Edward C. Bairstow, *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925).

However, above all of these, it was the compositional oeuvre of Charles Hubert Hastings Parry was perhaps the most influential body of work to influence Finzi's choral writing, a point repeatedly referenced by biographers, but often inadequately explored. Parry was a hugely prolific composer of large scale works for chorus and orchestra, almost to the point that it is difficult to know where to begin a comparison with Finzi, whose choral works are, admittedly, less abundant. Finzi's association with the music of Parry began early in his compositional career, when he produced a (now lost) orchestral arrangement of Parry's *Jerusalem* performed anonymously in February 1922 for a Leeds Philharmonic Society concert.¹⁹¹ He later became a champion of Parry's music, collecting and cataloguing the works of the composer and wrote a number of evaluations of the composer, who, apart from a number of famous works had been largely neglected since his death.¹⁹² As previously discussed, Parry's *Invocation to Music* and other choral works by the composer were particularly influential. Bernard Benoliel has written:

If there was any work by Parry which was to exercise a profound and lasting influence on English composers of the next two generations it was *Invocation to Music*, in its peculiarly English vocal style, its breaking down of the traditional cantata divisions and its finely poised use of symphonic elements.¹⁹³

In his quotation, Benoliel implies the symphonic aspirations of Parry's work at a time when symphonies, with the notable exception of Beethoven's 9th, rarely contained choirs, with twentieth-century Germanic composers such as Gustav Mahler usually seen as the promulgators of this form.

A comparison, particularly of Parry's Milton setting *Blest Pair of Sirens*, a work known intimately by Finzi, and one of the few works by Parry to remain in the repertoire

¹⁹¹ McVeagh, 20.

¹⁹² Gerald Finzi, 'Hubert Parry: A Re-Evaluation' in *Music Maker* (Summer 1949).

¹⁹³ Bernard Benoliel, 'Invocation to Music' in *Parry: The Soul's Ransom and other works* (Colchester: Chandos Records, 2006). CHAN241-31.

throughout Finzi's lifetime, has been conducted by Stephen Banfield in *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*, in which he notes that this work has much in common with the ceremonial style of *For St Cecilia*, for example noting that 'Both works start with resplendent, ceremonial orchestral prelude and stolid choral entry in Eb.'¹⁹⁴ Amongst his larger works, a comparison of the topos of Finzi's *Intimations of Immortality* and Parry's 1892 work *The Lotos-Eaters: Choric Song*, based on the *Song of the Lotos-Eaters* by Lord Tennyson reveals many similarities, both harmonically, structurally, melodically and at points motivically. While this is by no means Parry's best-known work (or indeed perhaps the most readily comparable), the orchestration, the delegation of the choral sections and the choice of poem make suggest that Parry was, above all others, the primary influence upon Finzi's *Intimations of Immortality*.

As detailed in *C. Hubert H. Parry: His Life and Music*, Parry gave an account to Sedley Taylor of the compositional methods he employed for completing this work, which are ultimately paralleled by the roles assigned by Finzi to his tenor in *Intimations of Immortality*:

I tried to make the music a comment on the poem and to follow the alternation of the human longing for ease and repose and languorous self-indulgence...The soprano solo is as it were the 'inner spirit' referred to in verse 2, and the chorus the human creatures with their protests against their haunting memories and their restless feelings of destiny driving them whither they would not. The moods are alternated and so are Solo and Chorus.¹⁹⁵

Although Tennyson's source poem *The Song of the Lotos-Eaters* is of a more 'hedonistic' nature than Wordsworth's, in his setting, Parry switches between moments of exuberance and introspection, a technique used in *Intimations* by his setting of contrasting lines such as 'not

¹⁹⁴ Banfield, 347.

¹⁹⁵ C. Hubert Parry: Letter to Sedley Taylor, 4 June 1892, CUL add. MS 6259. Reprinted in Jeremy Dibble, *C. Hubert H. Parry: His Life and Music*, 297.

for thee I raise/a song of thanks and praise' (?) and 'And by the vision splendid/Is on his way intended.' (444-448).

The two works open with an analogous solo line hinting at a later melody, in Parry's work a searching solo clarinet, in Finzi's a solo horn. This is later joined by a falling inverted triadic movement:



Fig. 4.18 Parry, *The Lotos-Eaters*, bars 1-12.¹⁹⁶



Fig. 4.19 Finzi, *Intimations of Immortality*, bars 1-10.

However, compared to Finzi's long orchestral introduction, Parry opens the poem soon after this motif, with a homophonic choral entry, rather than the staggered entry of Finzi. The two

¹⁹⁶ C. Hubert Parry, *The Lotos-Eaters* (London: Novello & Co. 1892).

composers also share analogous distribution of solo and choral sections. In *The Lotos-Eaters*, for example, we find solo soprano sections, homophonic choral parts and male and female voice sections, for example the male choral passage ‘Dear is the memory of our wedded lives’ (VIII).

A defining moment in the poem is ‘The Lotos blooms below the barren peak’, where the choir converges to a climax interposed with a lush orchestral repetition of the work’s thematic material, only for the mood to be despoiled by an all male ‘we’ve had enough of action’, the implied word painting and stodgy accompaniment changing the mood. This can be readily compared with the passage at figure 23 of *Intimations of Immortality*, where the dolce orchestral passage and reassuring ‘Heaven lies about us in our infancy’ is swiftly tempered by a dark male response ‘shades of the prison house begin to close upon the growing boy’.¹⁹⁷

The *Invocation to Music: An Ode in Honour of Henry Purcell* was a collaboration between Parry and the then-poet laureate Robert Bridges, (whose poetry Finzi set in his *Seven Unaccompanied Part-songs* and *In Terra Pax*).¹⁹⁸ Rather like Blunden and Finzi’s collaboration on *For St Cecilia*, *Invocation to Music* was a collaborative effort of the two foremost artists in England in the late nineteenth century and written for the Leeds Triennial Musical Festival in 1895. Although arguably on a larger scale, with three soloists, the work displays marked similarities to Finzi’s general topography and structure.

Before beginning an examination of Parry’s *Invocation to Music* in comparison to *Intimations of Immortality*, it is worth pointing out the differences between the works. Firstly, it was written for three soloists – soprano, tenor and bass, who are given more expansive

¹⁹⁸ C. Hubert Parry, *Invocation to Music* (London: Novello & Co, 1895).

solo, duet and trio sections in comparison to Finzi's work. The *Invocation to Music* is a larger work – longer, and more ambitiously planned. As a result, unlike Finzi's single continuous work, the *Invocation* is divided into distinct movements. Parry divides his work into ten sections in the contents page of the 1895 Novello choral score, divided by the vocal forces used or by the title of the section, although this is probably separated into these sections for ease of choral direction than on a structural basis. When the work is performed and studied, seven distinct sections are evident, on the basis of pauses and harmonic climaxes in the music:

1. Introduction – 'Myriad voiced queen' and 'Turn, O Return!'
2. Solo – 'Thee fair Poetry oft hath sought'
3. Chorus – 'The monstrous sea with melancholy war'
4. Duet – 'Love to Love calleth'
5. Dirge – 'To me, fair-hearted Goddess, come!', 'Man, born of desire' and 'Rejoice ye dead'
6. Trio – 'O enter with me'
7. Final chorus – 'Thou, O Queen of sinless grace'.

Like Finzi's work, Parry's is diatonic, and makes extensive use of tonic-dominant relationships, for example the first movement opening in F major before changing to D and A major. To conclude this section, there follows a comparison between the structure of Parry's and Finzi's works, paying note to allocation of soloists and vocal forces, harmonic tendencies and the poem itself. Note the similarity of the structure, particularly the dirge/funeral march and the recapitulation/finale sections where it returns to its original key. Note also the shared reliance on the part-song amid the solo and choral sections:

Admittedly, Parry's work is the more optimistic of the pair, although parts such as the aforementioned 'Now while the birds thus sing' feature the inherent forcefulness of Parry's 'The monstrous sea', both featuring expressive orchestral introductions with homophonic declamation in their respective choral entries. Other sections similarly correspond in tone; note the tenor solo 'Love to love calleth', which surely compares to 'The rainbow comes and goes'. However, the most notable comparative feature is Parry's 'dirge', which forms a third of his composition, and is mirrored by what Banfield titles Finzi's 'funeral march' section in his diagram, but here labelled, probably more appropriately as a dirge. note the similar distribution of parts. Although I have not included 'Oh joy that in our embers' as part of Finzi's 'dirge', the section is comparable to the placing of the soprano and chorus 'Rejoice ye dead' at the end of the dirge, figuratively rejoicing in Wordsworth's 'embers' of the memory of childhood in the same way as the 'fame' of the dead is bright. The comparisons of this section also include the distribution of the tenor soloist and chorus. The earlier section of Parry's dirge 'Man, born of desire' also has comparisons to Finzi's 'Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting'. On the whole, though, Finzi's work concludes on a less optimistic note.

As we have seen, Finzi's *Intimations of Immortality* was to be the culmination of his handling of the large-scale choral ode; more so than his other works, there are elements of direct homage to his precedents through his choice of structure (although as in all of his works he lets the text and its Pindaric structure dictate more than a generic musical form). We have seen the standard Finzi paradigms; song-like tenor solos which hark back to an era when music and poetry were one and the same thing, complex choral writing of a largely homophonic nature, sometimes juxtaposed with deft handling of multiple moving voices. In particular, we see Finzi's skill as a painter of musical imagery to match the sentiments within the poem; although sometimes his interpretations are overly literal, we mostly see his melodic material and accompaniment as a successful evocation of the spirit of Wordsworth's text in

presenting an ultimately nostalgic, wistful impression of the loss of innocence experienced by an adult looking upon the experiences of his childhood, something felt keenly by Finzi. The next few years of Finzi's life would be met with both success and the knowledge that his life was drawing to a close.

Chapter V: Late Works

By 1951, Finzi had been diagnosed with terminal Hodgkin's Disease, news which he kept from all but his close family. However, in retrospect, it can be seen that Finzi spent the rest of his life frantically completing works which he had started years before, completing commissions and writing what were to be two of his most personal works – the *Cello Concerto*, dedicated to his wife, and *In Terra Pax*.

i. *Magnificat* and 'God is Gone Up'

Finzi's concert *Magnificat* and the anthem 'God is Gone Up' are ultimately church anthems, featuring only brief solo sections, and will not be discussed here in length. However, they require mention due to their scale, particularly on the part of the *Magnificat*, which is not intended for liturgical use on the basis of its length and Finzi's decision not to include a Gloria at the end, instead concluding the anthem with an Amen (which is almost of the length and quality of the Amen concluding *Lo, The Full Final Sacrifice*). They are also unusual in being available with orchestral accompaniment. Both the *Magnificat* and 'God is Gone Up' are ceremonial in style, and both suggest a ternary structure. Indeed, of the two 'God is Gone Up' is perhaps the most interesting. It is a four minute-long anthem based on a text by Edward Taylor 'specially composed for St Cecilia's Day Service at St Sepulchre's Church, Holborn 1951.'¹⁹⁹ It is usually grouped with two other anthems as part of his Op.27. It was one of the few late anthems that Finzi orchestrated, and amongst his later works is the greatest expression of the influence of Edward Bairstow. Bairstow's celebrated anthem *Blessed City, Heavenly Salem* of 1914 is particularly comparable (see fig.2.20). Note the

¹⁹⁹ Gerald Finzi, 'God is Gone Up' (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1952). 2.

opening organ accompaniment in large triadic patterns set against an ascending scalar figure in the bass, which ends with the first choral entry, a declamatory fortissimo expression, changing into a more tempered declaration – ‘vision dear of peace and love’, compared to ‘resounding trumpet melody’. The structure of ‘God is Gone Up’ is in ternary form, with a declamatory opening changing mood into an almost mystical central section, and concluding with a repetition of the opening phrase. Note the inverted parallel sixths in the organ accompaniment in bars 1-4. The contrary motion of the keyboard parts, plus the continuous pedal note of B set up dissonances which are resolved at the end of their respective phrases, for example beat 3 of bar 2. This style is characteristic of the composer, appearing in the organ introduction for the early ‘Up those Glad and Brightsome Hills’ (fig. 2.18) and the introduction to ‘The Rapture’ in *Dies Natalis* (fig. 5.2).

The musical score for the opening section of 'God is Gone Up' by Gerald Finzi is presented in two systems. The first system shows the organ introduction, with the right hand playing triadic patterns and the left hand an ascending scalar figure. A pedal line is marked 'Ped: Reeds (only)' and 'f'. The second system shows the choral entry, with the vocal parts entering on the lyrics 'God is gone up with a tri-'. The organ accompaniment continues with inverted parallel sixths in the first four bars. The score includes tempo markings 'ritenuto pochiss' and 'A tempo'.

Fig. 5.1 Gerald Finzi, ‘God is Gone Up’ opening section.



Fig. 5.2 Gerald Finzi, 'The Rapture' from *Dies Natalis*, bars 8-10.

Meanwhile the *Magnificat* is a setting of the Song of Mary for large chorus and organ, and was later orchestrated in 1956. This is a fairly faithful setting of the text, although again Finzi slightly subverts it by not including the compulsory Gloria at the end, just an Amen, which renders it unusable in liturgical contexts. However, at over ten minutes long, it is also perhaps rather too long for standard Evensong services, and was always intended as a concert work. However, in terms of beauty, the Amen is almost on a par with that of *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice*.

ii. *In Terra Pax* (1954)

In Terra Pax was to be Finzi's last choral work and, in common with the *Requiem da Camera*, was not composed for a commission, but purely because Finzi wished to write it.²⁰⁰ Finzi titles the work 'Christmas scene', and in comparison to the secular texts chosen by the composer in his earlier choral works, *In Terra Pax* almost works as a miniature oratorio or cantata, dramatising the events told in the *Gospel according to St Luke* amid a frame narrative of a poem by Robert Bridges.

If we are to view the work as a miniature version of the late nineteenth century British renaissance of the oratorio and cantata forms, we see a number of nineteenth-century trends

²⁰⁰ Although unspecified commissioned works were often works in gestation, with the deadline for premieres acting as the catalyst for completing a piece, as in the case of *Intimations of Immortality*.

emerging. Howard E. Smither writes that with British oratorio forms in the late nineteenth century, composers moved away from the models of the Baroque and Classical eras, with the influence of Germanic Romanticism coming to the fore:

Wagnerian principles were increasingly adopted – or at least adapted to a composer's personal style. English oratorios became more dramatic, included more long, continuous scenes, and used more reminiscence motifs and occasionally even leitmotifs.²⁰¹

If we view Finzi's work within this definition, we find Smither's contention that nineteenth century oratorio forms came to follow the personal compositional style of their creator, with *In Terra Pax* acting as a veritable catalogue of stylistic trends within Finzi's previous works; in this sense, we find extensive repetition of motifs and familiar figures in the accompaniment to illustrate the 'characters' in the work, namely the baritone narrator, the soprano angel and peripheral characters (the shepherds, the angelic multitude).

However, to state that Finzi was entirely influenced by the nineteenth century would be incorrect, as the piece owes as much to the earlier composers of the Baroque, especially the cantatas and oratorios of Bach; following Finzi's death, Vaughan Williams quoted the work in Finzi's obituary 'A Many-Sided Man', specifically categorising the work as a cantata – indeed, given the rough overture-recitative-chorale-aria-chorale-recitative structure, it certainly fits the Bachian model. He wrote:

Gerald Finzi's last new work was the cantata *In Terra Pax*. This work is significant not only for its intrinsic beauty but because it seemed to give us hope of even better things to come. These hopes will not be fulfilled. *In Terra Pax* is characteristically founded on a poem by Robert Bridges. Finzi's music shows an extraordinary affinity with this poet and with Thomas Hardy, both their language and their thought find an absolute counterpart in his settings.²⁰²

²⁰¹ Howard E. Smither. "Oratorio." Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Accessed 3 Nov. 2010. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20397>>.

²⁰² Ralph Vaughan Williams, 'Gerald Finzi: A Many-Sided Man', reprinted at the Finzi Trust website <<http://www.geraldfinzi.org/index6fe3.html?page=about/article.html&id=5>>

What sets this work apart from both baroque and nineteenth century works of similar style is the personal nature of the textual assemblage. Indeed, although Vaughan Williams perhaps overplays the significance of Bridges to Finzi's works (the number of Finzi's Hardy settings vastly outweigh those settings of Bridges,) he is indeed right that Bridges was a poet Finzi was evidently drawn to. After all, Bridges was a poet who had collaborated with Parry, inspired Holst's *Choral Fantasia*, and was the incumbent poet laureate throughout Finzi's developmental stages.

Finzi had already set seven poems in his Bridges part-songs, although he was dissatisfied with them, regarding them as 'old maidish'.²⁰³ The poem on which the work is based, Robert Bridge's *Noel: Christmas Eve 1913* had already won favour with the composer early in life, with the quotation 'A frosty Christmas Eve/when the stars were shining/Fared I forth alone' appearing in the score of his *Nocturne (New Year Music)*, both works evoked by the oft-repeated tale of Finzi walking upon Chosen Hill near Gloucester on New Year, where he heard church bells ringing in the new year in the valley below.²⁰⁴ At the time of writing the *Nocturne*, circa 1925, the composer had written to Robin Milford:²⁰⁵

Christmas will always be a time of silence and quiet, like Bridges' "A Frosty Christmas Eve".²⁰⁶

The poem itself had been first published by Bridges under the title 'A Christmas poem' in *The Times* in 1913, and later renamed to 'Noel: Christmas Eve 1913' for publication in his poetry collection *The Tapestry* in 1925 released to limited publication.²⁰⁷ It is likely that Finzi's own pacifism was the catalyst for the work's title 'In Terra Pax' which he argued should be translated 'on earth peace to all men of goodwill'. Noting the work's post-war

²⁰³ McVeagh, 77

²⁰⁴ Banfield, 96.

²⁰⁵ Milford later composed a setting of the poem himself in 1958.

²⁰⁶ Banfield, 96.

²⁰⁷ Donald E. Stanford, 'Robert Bridges and the Free Verse Rebellion' in *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Sep., 1971), 19.

timing, whether Finzi intended the work to be a reconciliatory piece is unclear, but it has clear overtones of the sentiments shared by his *Requiem da Camera* and *Farewell to Arms*. It is also notable that in these works, he uses a baritone soloist, which was his own voice range, perhaps suggesting a more personal experience.

The work, rather like in the *Requiem da Camera*, is also written for smaller forces than his major festival works – he originally conceived the work for baritone and soprano soloists, chorus, strings, harp and cymbal. It was in this form that it was first performed with his own string orchestra, the Newbury String Players, in 1954. The Newbury String Players was an amateur ensemble founded by the composer as a means of reviving neglected eighteenth-century string works by composers such as Boyce, Avison and Stanley. However, although it also performed a wide range of works by contemporary composers, Finzi himself hardly featured his own music, but made an exception in the case of his annual Christmas concert, for which this work was conceived, with a local choir being invited to perform the work. Finzi later rescored the work for full orchestra, the version in which it is most commonly performed today, for the Three Choirs Festival in 1955. Note the complex instructions on orchestration in the first page of the vocal score:

To H.W.S.

3

In Terra Pax

Christmas Scene

for Soprano and Baritone Soli, Chorus,
Strings, Harp* and Cymbal, or Full Orchestra†

DURATION
Approx. 14 mins.

Words by
ROBERT BRIDGES
and from St. LUKE II 8-14

Music by
GERALD FINZI

Adagietto $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 54$

PIANO *pp*

1 Poco tenuto *pp*

ritard.

Andantino $\text{♩} = \text{♩ of preceding } (\text{♩} = \text{c. } 108)$

p

*A Pianoforte can be used as an alternative to the Harp, if no Harp is available.

†A separate version for Full Orchestra with optional Trumpets and Trombones is available.

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B. & H. 17692

Fig. 5.3 Gerald Finzi, *In Terra Pax* title page.

Structure and thematic analysis

The work can be divided into two parts of equal length, with the tempo changing to allegro marking the start of the second part in which the ‘action’ of the work takes place. Finzi chose not to set the third stanza ‘Now blessed be the towers/That crown England so fair’, instead interposing a quotation from the *Gospel of Luke* II 8-14 interposing the second and fourth verse of Bridges’ poem. The text is allocated thus:

Part I

Orchestral introduction. D major.

Baritone solo: Bridges - ‘A Frosty Christmas Eve, when the stars were shining’. D major.

Chorus: Luke II 8-14: ‘And it was in that same country’.

Part II

Chorus: Luke II 8-14: ‘And lo, the angel of the Lord came among them’

Soprano solo: Luke II 8-14: ‘Fear not, fear not, for behold’

Chorus: Luke II 8-14: ‘And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude’

Orchestral interlude. Scherzo-like

Baritone solo: Bridges - ‘But to me, heard afar, it was starry music’. D major.

Chorus: Bridges – ‘Luke II 8-14

The key structures of the work in relation to the allocation of text and vocal forces can be seen overleaf. I have included a division where the cymbal heralds the angel descending to the shepherds, as despite being part of a continuous text, the score features a ‘lunga’ pause before the commencement of the allegro section.

The piece, like so many of Finzi's choral works, features an overture-like introductory section utilising a variety of motifs from the vocal sections of the work. The piece opens in D major, with a foreshadowing of the 'glory to God' motif. The opening is mysterious - slow and sparsely orchestrated, mainly for strings and harp. This is probably a result of *In Terra Pax* originally being scored for these forces, although a clarinet is evident in the orchestral version. The biggest aural difference between the string and orchestral arrangements is probably the addition of a celeste, featured prominently on the 'a frosty Christmas Eve' motif and the *animato* section beginning at bar 77 to illustrate the 'bright stars singing' – perhaps taking its cue from the 'Neptune - The Mystic' from Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. It is certainly the first time Finzi had utilised this instrument. At bar 21, the mood lightens with an Andantino which is the first full exposition of the 'glory to God motif', essentially the second subject theme. The melody has a counterpoint in a scale of parallel descending thirds, played by woodwind. In this section, Finzi plays a homage to other nativity works, with a sound akin to a number of similarly themed 'pastoral' works, in the literal sense of the word, in its evocation of shepherds. These include Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, particularly the 'Sinfonietta' introduction to Part II, which introduces the shepherds. The opening bass descent is evoked by Finzi's string section between bars 21 and 24. Also note Bach's use of syncopated rhythms in the melodic material and the repeated emphasis on the key signature of G major.



Fig. 5.5 Bach, 'Sinfonietta' from *Christmas Oratorio*. Part II.

In this excerpt, we can also observe a repeated motif, rather like the 'frosty Christmas Eve' gesture.

Parry's large choral work *Ode on the Nativity*, based on a text by Dunbar, also display similar warm, gentle orchestration spun from repeated motifs. Indeed any of the 'pastoral' orchestral evocations of the *Book of Luke* feature the paradigms displayed in Finzi's work, and as Gwilym Beechey points out, there is a distinct foreshadowing of Vaughan Williams' Christmas work *Hodie* of 1958. He also hears elements of his *Serenade to Music* (1938) and the chorus 'Turn you to the stronghold' from Elgar's *The Apostles*.²⁰⁸ There are also a number of inspirations evident in less 'classical' works – the 'Halleluiahs' which conclude the hymn tune *Lasst Uns Erfreuen*, most often heard in Vaughan Williams' harmonisations of 'Ye watchers and ye holy ones' and 'All creatures of our God and King', is perhaps the most prominent musical quotation; see bars 4-5 in figure 5.2, a prominent melodic motif throughout the work, both in the orchestral accompaniment and especially prominently in the orchestral bridge before the final passage from bars 227 to 231.

²⁰⁸ Gwilym Beechey, 'The Church Music of Gerald Finzi' in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 118, No. 1614. (August 1977). 669.



Fig. 5.6 'Lass Uns Erfreuen' bars 11-16.

Through this shared root, the work therefore has a link to the third movement of Vaughan Williams's *Fifth Symphony*, first performed in 1943 which was developed from fragments of his then-unfinished opera *The Pilgrim's Progress*, based on Bunyan's work, and at whose play-through Finzi had been present in 1941.²⁰⁹ An intentional association of the Pilgrim with the narrator in Finzi's work is not inconceivable, although it is more likely that each work takes individual inspiration from the 'hallelujah' of the hymn. Another inspiration noted by Diana McVeagh is the Christmas carol 'The First Nowell', the subject of the text being likewise on the visitation of the angel to the shepherds. The greatest melodic similarity is the downward melody line appearing at the opening of the carol (compare bar 4 of 5.2 to 5.4).

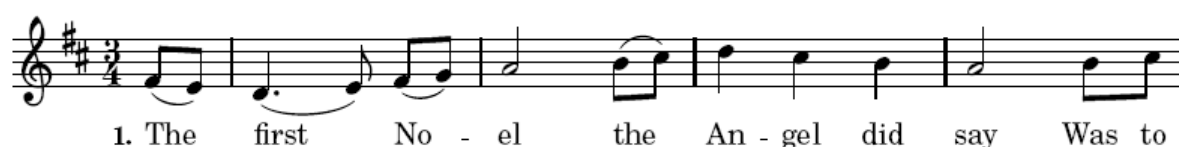


Fig. 5.7 'The First Nowell'.

The baritone solo enters in bar 50 of the work, with the tonality centred on D major, although this feeling is made less definite by the emphasis on F#, the third note of the triad, which could easily be a fifth from its relative B minor. The vocal setting of the baritone is typical of Finzi; the pacing, setting and structure is entirely dictated by the word-setting. Indeed, this whole section features almost exactly the same solo writing technique as we have seen in the tenor sections of *For St Cecilia* and *Intimations of Immortality*; the style and

²⁰⁹ Finzi-Ferguson, 23 December 1941, 227.

pacing could almost be described as ‘recitative’. Never strophic, the poem dictates the phrase lengths, which is why, even as far back as ‘August 1914’ from the *Requiem da Camera* we see time signatures expanded to match a particular phrase, for example the 5/4 to fit ‘distant music reached me/peals of bells a-ringing’ in a section that never feels like it is in 4/4.

In this sense, Finzi moves away from the more rigid Victorian structures of his predecessors such as Farrar (cf. *The Blessed Damozel*), allowing the text to create an entirely through-composed interpretation of the text. The orchestral accompaniment here is largely based on triads, especially second inversion parallel movement; displaying Finzi’s fondness for sixths; note the moving inverted chords within the lower strings in bars 57 to 59, for example.



Fig. 5.8 Gerald Finzi, *In Terra Pax* bars 57-58.

Within his vocal setting, there are any number of Finzi’s trademark phrases within the word setting, which adds a feeling of continuity with his earlier compositions – the falling triad at 54 (the ‘nothing in the world did know’ motif from *Dies Natalis* at ‘west-ward falls the hill’), the repeated use of a fourth (for example ‘dark vault above’ at 62, ‘bright stars singing’ at 78) and later an octave leap at bar 74 for the setting of ‘heard music in the fields’. The play between the tonic and dominant notes are frequent aspects of his solo part writing in ‘A frosty Christmas Eve’.

The choir, as we have seen in *For St Cecilia* and *Intimations of Immortality*, act as the narrators of the scene. The chorus's first entry is a solemn part-song 'And there were in the same country'. However, this is brief, with the passage descending into a lugubrious orchestral interlude based on 'keeping watch over their flock by night'. At this point in the work, a cymbal heralds the arrival of the angel, with a bright sound maintained by tremolo strings.

The soprano solo's entry is the highlight of the work, the comforting fifth of the opening 'fear not'. The soprano solo is centred on Gb major, but moves through a cycle of keys in fast succession. However, for the revelation of Christ's coming, a single bar is transformed into C major, forming the emotional centre of the work. The arrival of the 'heavenly host' is heralded by the return of the choir in split male-female entries, narrated against a frenzied orchestral accompaniment. The sopranos rise to an A natural, foreshadowing the 'Glory to God' polyphonic segment, where the sopranos and tenors also split into two lines. This section is the climax of the Biblical section, Finzi handling six choral parts simultaneously, with the orchestra also mirroring the vocal lines. Note here the use of parallel second inversion sixths in the accompaniment, for example at bars 190 to 192, a form of ambiguous chord extensively used by the composer in his many songs.

The image shows a musical score for a choir and piano. The choir parts are for Soprano (S.), Alto (C.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The piano part is at the bottom. The lyrics are: 'est, Glo - ry to God..... in the high - est, God..... in the high - est, Glo - ry to God..... peace and on earth high - est, and on earth..... peace, Glo - ry to God..... in the high - est, and on earth.....'. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The piano part provides a harmonic accompaniment with arpeggiated figures.

Fig. 5.9 Gerald Finzi, *In Terra Pax* bars 190-191.

In this polyphonic section, Finzi is showing a more developed use of a form which he had embraced as far back as the 1920s with the *Requiem da Camera*; 'We who are left, how shall we look again', through to the first choral entry in *Intimations of Immortality* 'the earth and every common sight to me did seem'. However, in this application, the multiple voices signify joy, rather than sadness. The initial fortissimo opening fades into pianissimo for the line that inspired the work's title 'and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.'

As we can see in the following example, the section consists of two phrases; 'glory to God', highlighted in blue, and 'and on earth peace' highlighted in red. Throughout this polyphony, both voices are distributed with a lead from soprano 1, with each voice entering at roughly half a bar intervals. As we can see in bars 192-3, the vocal entries are much closer, and densely distributed within the vocal parts as well as the orchestral accompaniment, which follows almost diagonally through the writing when seen on a page, and aurally creates a

cascading effect. As a result of the orchestral distribution, we are led to hear that there are more voices speaking than are actually participating in the sequence.

This forms an interesting contrast to Finzi's much earlier polyphonic section in the *Requiem da Camera*. In his earlier polyphonic writing, notice that the structure and voice entries are much simpler, coming at set intervals of half a bar and with fewer voice parts, evidence of Finzi's increased confidence with this form of writing by the time of *In Terra Pax*.

S. - est, Glo - ry to God..... in the high - est,
 C. God..... in the high - est, Glo - ry to God.....
 C. peace and on earth
 T. high - est, and on earth..... peace, Glo -
 T. high - est, and on earth..... peace,
 B. - ry to God..... in the high - est, and on earth.....
 and on earth peace, Glo - ry to
 in the high - est, Glo - ry to God..... in the high - est,
 C. peace, and on earth..... peace, Glo - ry to God.....
 T. - ry to God..... in the high - est, and on earth..... peace,
 T. and on earth..... peace, and on earth peace, and on
 B. peace, and on earth peace, and on earth peace,
 dim. poco a poco

Fig. 5.10 Bars 190 to 194 of *In Terra Pax*.

The musical score for bars 74 to 75 of *Requiem da Camera* is presented in two systems. The first system covers bars 74 and 75, and the second system covers bars 76 and 77. The vocal parts are Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The lyrics are as follows:

System 1 (Bars 74-75):

- S.:** The har-vest not yet won, the emp-ty bin, The
- A.:** The har-vest not yet won, the emp-ty bin, The friend-ly hor - ses
- T.:** The har-vest not yet won, the emp-ty bin, The friend-ly
- B.:** The har-vest not yet won, the emp-ty bin, The har-vest not yet won, the emp-ty bin.

System 2 (Bars 76-77):

- S.:** friend-ly hor - ses ta-ken from the stalls, The fal-low on the hill
- A.:** ta-ken from the stalls, The fal-low on the hill not yet brought
- T.:** hor - ses ta-ken from the stalls, The fal-low on the hill not yet
- B.:** The friend-ly hor ses ta-ken from the stalls, The fal-low on the

Fig. 5.11 Bars 74 to 75 of *Requiem da Camera*.

Following this, there is a long orchestral interlude mimicking the chorus and the opening of the work which again makes use of a descending parallel sixth in a first inversion. The work ends with a small epilogue from the baritone soloist at bar 238. The tonality is complex, with a new key for each bar, beginning on Eb major, C major, Db major, F major and, in the fashion of the earlier soprano solo when Christ's speech is mentioned in bar 252, the tonality changes to a new key of A major. As with most of this section, the key centre is made hazier by Finzi's use of inverted chords. At bar 259, as previously seen at Figure 4.16, the 'eternal silence' of the baritone is illustrated by a wide octave vibrato string accompaniment, with its parallel in Finzi's *Intimations of Immortality*. The work ends quietly

in the key it began in, D major with a part song at bar 263 leading to a repetition of the opening thematic material

Unlike many of Finzi's larger choral works, the work gives the impression of being a genuinely religious work, and is even included in an article on his church music.²¹⁰ Indeed, one feels that the work can truly be defined as a cantata or even 'miniature oratorio' in the sacred sense, given a significant proportion is based on a Biblical text. Like Elgar's *Gerontius*, it contains a narrative, and a dramatic 'scene', and the singular voice of an individual, witnessing that scene in his own imagination. Certainly, the central section, in which an angel descends to comfort the shepherds is particularly dramatic, featuring a diatonicism typical of the composer.

However, despite the revelation of the Biblical text, the work is also secular, as the evocation in the text is purely figurative, as the baritone soloist speculates on what it would be like to experience the nativity through recollecting the description in *Luke*:

The old words came to me
by the riches of time
Mellowed and transfigured
as I stood on the hill,
Hearkening in the aspect
of th' eternal silence.

The parallel with the 'eternal silence' of Wordsworth is notable (see Fig. 4.15 and Fig. 4.16). The solo baritone's place in the world at the end could not be further away from the ancient tale, being envisaged instead somewhere on a hill in Gloucestershire, observing that a 'glory has passed away'. It is a position which probably most sums up the composer's own agnostic beliefs.

²¹⁰ Gwilym Beechey, 'The Church Music of Gerald Finzi' in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 118, No. 1614. (August 1977). 669.

Early versions

The majority of Finzi's autograph manuscripts are deposited in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.²¹¹ However, the composer made a point of disposing of his sketches once a work had been completed, and as a result it is very rare that we get to see his development sketches, especially for published works. In the case of *In Terra Pax* we are fortunate that Finzi was using one notebook of early ideas for sketching another work, his light music *Serenade for Strings*, which he did not manage to complete. As a result, a number of development sketches from *In Terra Pax* are preserved, particularly his ideas for the opening sequence and the opening baritone solo.

In this notebook, labelled 1953, we find that the opening section was intended to be in a variety of different keys, the opening sequence probably in F major, a later section in Bb major. As a result of the key, it suffers from the same high G for the baritone that Bairstow had criticised at an earlier juncture, and was probably the reason that the completed work moved three semitones down to D major.

The most unexpected change in the early sketches of the orchestral introduction is the lack of a return to the 'hallelujah' motif in bar 32. Instead, the 'Glory to God' motif is continued in a series of rather unusual keys:

²¹¹ With the exception of a few private pieces such as a Christmas song for Herbert Howells based on the Carol from the *Five Bagatelles*, now in the possession of Diana McVeagh.



Fig. 5.12 Bar 32 of *In Terra Pax* (rejected notebook manuscript).

Finzi stops after twelve bars, two of which were not completed and not included here. This may simply be because Finzi noted it was not successful. However, the slightly unusual diatonicism of the sequence gives us insight into how he achieved the more successful key changes in the piece, for example the previously-mentioned soprano solo from bars 161 to 165, where the setting of ‘Christ the Lord’ is highlighted by a move from Gb major to an inversion of C major and into Eb major in the space of four bars.

Fig. 5.13 Bars 159-165 of *In Terra Pax*.

Also preserved in the notebook are examples of alternative early word settings, for example in the opening baritone solo. The excerpt below illustrates his original setting of ‘distant music reached me’ (F major: 1), the same phrase transposed into his eventual key for comparison purposes (D major: 2), and the setting used in the final edition (D major: 3):

1 Dis tant mu sic reached me peals of bells a rin ging

2 Dis tant mu sic reached me peals of bells a rin ging

3 Dis tant mu sic reached me peals of bells a-rin-ging

Fig. 5.14 Variants of *In Terra Pax*.

Note how the original setting is more literal in its ‘distancing’ of the notes, altered later to a smoother melody, also incorporating Finzi’s standard I-V-I word setting. The later section retains a similar speech rhythm, although the emphasis placed on the sixth in the original is gone. The same can be observed in the next passage, which loses both instances of a sixth leap in the transition between the sketch (1) and the final version (2):

1 Then sped my thoughts to keep that first Christ mas of all When the

2 Then sped my thoughts to keep that first Christ mas of all When the

Ex.5.15 Variants of *In Terra Pax*.

Similar note differences appear throughout the sketches of the solo passage, and it is unfortunate that the sketches of the choral passages, or other works do not exist.

As we have seen here, *In Terra Pax* acts as the final chapter in Finzi's compositional life, bringing together many threads that bind his oeuvre together; a mixing of sacred and secular in a personally-selected text, instances of through-composed song-setting in the context of a larger work and choral writing which encompasses both homophony and polyphony in its form, as well as elements of the unaccompanied part-song, all of which have been present throughout his large choral compositions.

Conclusion

From 1924 until his death, choral works formed a significant proportion of Gerald Finzi's compositional output and although not the most frequently-performed parts of his relatively small output of 56 named opus numbers, his large-scale choral works prove themselves to be an invaluable key to unlocking his compositional ethos and inspirations, acting as bookends illustrating the beginning of his period of maturity as a composer through to his final completed work.

As we have seen over the works examined, distinct compositional trends and influences can be discerned, especially in Finzi's use of repeated thematic motifs which appear across his oeuvre; in terms of the thematic construction of his accompaniments, observable elements from the *Requiem da Camera* appear in works written nearly thirty years later, albeit with more confidence and complexity. From earlier youthful experiments with unusual time signatures, over-elaborate orchestral requirements and a brief dabble with the folk music movement of the early twentieth century, Finzi found his voice with the *Requiem da Camera*, both in the orchestral instrumental introduction, which featured an 'overture' structure consisting of subject themes from the work ahead, a Hardy song setting (which was to influence his own Hardy settings for years), to the structure of his choral writing, moving deftly between polyphony, homophonic part-songs and solo sections, which once merged together into a single continuous work, rather than dispersed movements, provided the composer with a template for each of his later compositions.

His first major success with the cantata *Dies Natalis* gave the composer the confidence he required to write larger settings of poetry, and this confidence is evident by the time of what Howard Ferguson believed to be his greatest work; *Intimations of Immortality*. However, with his assimilation of both sacred and secular text across his works, it is perhaps

his final work *In Terra Pax* which best displays his ability as a complex word-setter and choral writer, while still maintaining the distinctive sound of his earlier compositions.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*'s brief entry on Finzi notes that although the composer broadly fitted into the English tradition of Elgar and Vaughan Williams, defining him within this school of composition is troublesome.²¹² Indeed, while Finzi cannot be said to have produced his compositions in isolation from the musical establishment, indeed quite the opposite, he certainly maintained a unique style half-way between the Baroque and late Romantic eras, with harmonies more akin to pre-Stravinsky early twentieth-century works. Although Finzi was evidently aware of developments in the Western classical canon, he tended to look back to an earlier tonal age; with regards to 'Modernity', Finzi rarely, if ever experiments with newer compositional techniques emerging throughout the era he was writing in, and even dissonance is rare in the melodic and tonal framework of Finzi's orchestrations.

Indeed, it is most likely that it was through his early private compositional lessons from Farrar and Bairstow, as well as his work in preserving the works of composers such as Hubert Parry and his contemporaries, which led to Finzi composing modern works in a late nineteenth or early twentieth-century idiom of the generation before his own; at this stage, even contemporaries of Finzi such as Vaughan Williams were experimenting with newer choral forces, yet Finzi was writing works which were best suited to the 'choir festival', a form which was gradually dying out after the Second World War.

Finzi's habit of leaving works on the 'back-burner' can present problems when making these observations, most notably when a work such as *Intimations of Immortality* had a fifteen-year gestation period. However, above all, through his choral works, we can see

²¹² *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music* ed. Michael Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996), 253.

continuity. Other than an evidently less-developed grasp of handling harmony and time signature allocation in his word settings, Finzi's early choral works show elements that were to feature as prominently in his last works. The influence of Parry, Bairstow, as well as the 17th and 18th centuries are key – indeed, when Finzi is inspired by Bach, as in *Dies Natalis*, he could easily be described as a 'neo-Baroque' composer, and therefore unlike the general view of Finzi as composing in an outdated idiom, was instead working in a style much in vogue during the 1940s with continental composers such as Hindemith, Stravinsky and even Shostakovich. However, despite these inspirations from centuries past, Finzi maintains his own compositional voice throughout.

This is particularly evident through his use of familiar structural devices and choice melodic motifs which appear repeatedly throughout his compositions and act as a distinctive signature of the composer. A further study of Finzi may wish to look into how, in the absence of a symphony, his development as an orchestrator was shaped by writing the orchestral accompaniments for his choral compositions. However, it is my contention that it is the vocal and choral writing which most evidently illustrate Finzi's development throughout this set of works.

In *Absalom's Place*, when discussing his motivation to continue composing works which were often met with misunderstanding, his answer was that:

...if appreciation were a measure of merit and cause for self-esteem, it would long ago have been time for me to shut up shop, class myself as a failure, and turn to something of what the world is pleased to call a more 'useful' nature.

Yet some curious force compels us to preserve and project into the future the essence of our individuality, and, in doing so, to project something of our age and civilization. The artist is like the coral insect, building his reef out of the transitory world around him and making a solid structure to last long after his own fragile and uncertain life.²¹³

²¹³ *Absalom's Place*

Finzi felt that by composing these works he was himself gaining ‘intimations of immortality’, and by incorporating so much of himself in them created some of the finest word-settings of his era.

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Appendix

Only a Man Harrowing Clods

Thomas Hardy

from Requiem da Camera - Original version, Painswick 1923

Gerald Finzi

Voice

Piano

On - ly a man harrow ing

clods, in a slow si lent walk. With an

old horse that stum bles and nods. Half a sleep as they

stalk.

16

on ly thin smoke with out flame from the heaps of

18

couch grass But things will go on ward the

21

same Though dy nas ties pass.

26

Yon der a

31

maid and her wight go whis per ing by:

34

War's a nnuls will cloud in to night.

37

Ere their sto ry die.

44